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(6TH CENTURY B.C. TO 1526 A.D.)

AMIYA KUMAR PATTANAYAK

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Chapter - 1

INTRODUCTION

History has been defined as "the study of man's dealings with other men and the adjustment of working relations between human groups." Hence, the history of India goes back to that remote past when man first settled here, immaterial whether migrated from outside or emerged here by a process of evolution. He grew up essentially as a product of the environment that surrounded him, the climate, the geography, the flora and fauna. Indian history presents striking parallel to that of other countries, which can boast of a culture and civilization dating back to antiquity. Human civilization began here in the same way if not the same time as in other parts of the world.

India is a sharply demarcated land bound on the north by the world's largest mountain range, the chain of Himalayas, which extends from the northwest to northeast and separates India from rest of Asia and the world. In the far south, southwest and southeast, the broad seas; the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal respectively separate India from the other parts of the globe. The vast country, rightly called as a sub-continent looks like an 'Inverted Spire' hanging from the great scimitar like Himalayas. It extends from Kashmir in the north to Kanyakumari in the extreme south for about 3,200 kms. between 8^0 4' to 37^0 6' latitude of north parallels and in breadth, west to east of about 3,000 kms. between 68^0 7' to 97^0 25' of east meridian of longitude. The total area is about 32,80,483 Sq. kms.

The Nomenclature

The name India has been derived from the name of the great river Sindhu, in the northwest, which was the lifeline of the earliest civilization of India. The Persians who entered into India through that route found difficulty in pronouncing the 'S' for which they called it as Hindu- 'H' in place of 'S'. The Greeks who came to India after the Persians called it as Indu or Indus. During the later period from Hindu the land came to be known as Hindustan and the people as Hindus. Similarly the name India came from Indus. However, the ancient Indians called their land as *Jambudwipa* (The island of the Jambu tree) or *Bharatavarsha* (The land of the legendary emperor Bharata, son of Dushyanta and Sakuntala). Some others believe that the name Bharat has been taken from the name of an ancient tribe called the Bharatas.

Splendid Isolation

India is effectively and indisputably isolated from the rest of the world by natural and geographical barriers. The mighty Himalaya acts as an admirable defensive rampart of India against invasion by land. The high seas guard the frontiers of India on three sides. The Bay of Bengal, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean guard the east, west and southern boundaries of India respectively. This has lent an element of individuality to

India. Besides the geographical barriers, which play a vital role in isolating India, the Indian history has also helped in maintaining its isolationist existence. The few invaders who have come to India have either temporarily come into contact with India or have permanently settled here joining the ranks of others and helping to evolve a distinctive Indian culture. The Aryans, the Sakas, the Kushanas, the Mongols etc. who have come to India have gradually settled and lost their separate identity. They have got themselves absorbed into the fold of Indianness to such an extent that differences from their original stock developed in more ways than one. Similarly, the Indians have very rarely gone out on expeditions outside India. Hence, Indian culture has grown on its own without being influenced by outside world. Politically India used to be considered as a very powerful kingdom from the very beginning. Even the invasion of Alexander, the great was restricted to its vestibule.

However, it is another thing that the same seas and mountains which otherwise were considered effective and impenetrable barriers acted as excellent mediums of interaction. Nature sets limits; man transgresses them with his tools and his vision. Man progressively creates specific environment and makes history. A number of passes in the Himalayas provided openings for invasion and racial immigration. Thus, came the Aryans, the Persians, the Greeks, the Scythians, the Sakas and the Kushanas during ancient period, and the Mongols during medieval period. Similarly, the seas fostered India's commercial interaction with Egypt, Babylonia, Greece, Rome and the South-east Asia. The Greater India or the establishment of Indian colonies in the Southeast Asia was achieved through the seas. The vast coastline, dotted with a number of natural ports made India a great maritime power. Nevertheless, the Europeans followed the sea route to conquer India.

Continuity of Civilization

India takes her place side by side with Egypt and Mesopotamia as a country where we can trace the dawn of human civilization and the beginning of the thoughts, ideas and activities, which have shaped the destinies of mankind all over the civilized world. The history of India, thus, possesses an aspect of universality, which so strikingly distinguishes the history of Egypt, Babylonia and Assyria during the early period and Persia, Greece and Rome later.

Continuity, however, has been the keynote of Indian culture. The ancient civilization of India differs from those of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece in the way that its traditions have been preserved without any break down to the present day. The ancient cultures of Egypt, Mesopotamia and even Greece have long ceased to exist. But in case of India the present is fully conscious of the past. Over a period of more than five thousand years not much has changed. The same *mantra* that a Brahmin used to chant before taking his bath in praise of the seven rivers of India, more than four thousand years before continues unchanged even today. The society as described in the ancient epics has changed very little even today. An average Indian still preserves veneration for ideals and concepts which his ancestors cherished thousands of years ago. But the present day Egyptians had no knowledge of their past until its discovery by the archaeologists. Even the glory of Periclean Athens is vague for the present Greece. They are now mere past memories only for academic interest.

The Indian history and culture form an unbroken chain by which the past is indissolubly linked up with the present. People of India are sentimentally attached to their past and always clamour for its complete restoration. The old customs and practices are so deeply ingrained in the minds of the people that it can hardly be delinked. The ancient India bequeathed to us a vast treasury of texts, which represent the intellectual, religious and literary activities for a period over four thousand years. The earliest literary work, the *Samhita* of the *Rigveda* and many other contemporary works on geography, astronomy, science and economics continue to remain alive even in the present which is not possible in case of Egypt, Greece and Rome. Some Indian writers even seek to find in ancient India a replica of the most advanced political institutions of the modern times.

Geographical divisions

The configuration of India is primarily divided into three distinct regions with sharply differentiated features – the Himalayan region, the Indo-Gangetic plain and the Deccan plateau.

The Himalayan region

The crescent shaped Himalayan range running from Afghanistan in the north to Assam in the east has a length of nearly 2,560 kms. with an average breadth of 240 to 320 kms. The Himalayas contain altogether about 114 peaks of over 20,000 feet, of which 75 exceed 24,000 feet. The best known are Everest or Gourishankar (29,140 feet), the highest mountain peak in the world, Kanchanjangha (28,176 feet), Dhaulagiri (26,826 feet), Naga Parvat (26,620 feet) and Nandadevi (25,661 feet).

The three lifelines of India, river Indus in the west, the holiest of holy, river Ganga in the centre and Brahmaputra in the east flow from the Himalayas. The perennial snows of the Himalayas are as important to the hydrography of India as the two monsoon winds.

The river Indus (about 2880 Kms. of total length) rises from the Kailas Mountain and flows through Punjab and Sindh, which prevents the region from turning in to a desert. It receives water from five tributaries, Sutlej (Vedic Satadru), Chenab (Vedic Asikini or Chandrabhaga), Ravi (Vedic Parusni or Iravati), Beas (Vedic Vipasa) and Jhelum (Vedic Vitasta). The Indus is navigable for about 1280 Kms. that is upto Dera Ismail Khan. The river Ganga (a total length of 2480 Kms.) rises in the central Himalayas in a glacial ice-cave known as Go-mukh (cow's mouth) and flows for 288 Kms. till it reached Haradwar. There after its Himalayan tributaries join it, the Jamuna (which joins at Allahabad), the Gogra, the Gandaka and the Kosi and other tributaries like Chambal and Son. After reaching the ancient Gauda kingdom the Ganga divides itself into two branches namely the Bhagirathi (Hoogly) and Padma. Brahmaputra (about 2880 Kms. of total length) originates at the eastern base of Kailas Mountain and flows through Tibet under the name Tsan-Po. It enters India near Sadiya in Assam under the name Dihang. Then Dibang and Luhit join it and the united stream is known as Brahmaputra. After passing through Assam it joins Padma. It is navigable upto Dibrugarh in Assam for a distance of about 1200 Kms.

The mountain is famous as the abode of Gods, Goddesses and sages. It houses the famous lake Manosarovar, one of the holiest of places for the Hindus. Goddess Parvati was the daughter of Himalayas. Kailash, the abode of Lord Shiva is a part of the Himalayas. Kalidasa has described it as king of mountains or *nagadhiraja* and ensouling divinity or *devatatma.* It contains many important and popular hill-stations like Darjeeling, Simla, Kulu and Manali.

Its outer ranges, which touch the northern plain, are called the 'Sivaliks'. The west of the Himalayas is the Hindukush mountains parts of which are now included in Afghanistan. Further south there are Safed Koh, Sulaiman and Khirthar mountains as the northwestern boundary of India. In the east there are Patkoi Hills, Naga Hills, Khasi Hills, Garo Hills, Jaintia Hills, Lushai Hills and Chin Hills. The Himalayas also contain some high plateaus and valleys like the Kashmir valley. The green valley at an elevation of 6000 feet is about 132 Kms. long and 40 Kms. broad. It has been justly regarded as "the earthly paradise". The protective cover of the Himalayas has given to India its civilization and social structure from the earliest times to present day. The thick Tarai forest borders the central Himalayas.

The mountains form an impenetrable defensive rampart of India against any invasion. These are so steep and so densely forest-covered that the crossing becomes almost impossible. However, the Khyber, Gomal, Kuram, Tochi and Bolan passes in the Himalayas have often served as the highways of active interaction with the outside world by way of foreign invasion and racial immigration. The Aryans, the Persians, the Greeks, the Scythians, the Perthians and the Kushanas during ancient period and the Mongols during medieval and the Chinese during recent times have entered through these routes. Almost all the foreign invaders to India except the Europeans have entered through these passes. In the northwest, the Khyber Pass (about 32 Kms. long) with the city of Peshawar (ancient Parushapura) at its mouth opened the road to Kabul. Kabul as such was well connected by land route to a number of places of Central Asia and Asia Minor. Similarly, through Bolan Pass the road reached Kandhar, another great meeting place of ancient routes to Persia. Lying between Afghanistan and Dera Ismail Khan, the Gomal route was shorter and safer. Another line of communication, which passed through the inhospitable Makran region along the coast of Beluchistan, connected Perisa (Iran). This was the route followed by Alexander on his return journey. Through these routes from time immemorial, migrating tribes, peaceful traders and conquering armies have entered into India.

By protecting India from the dry cold winds from Tibet and serving as a great screen for the monsoon winds it has increased the fertility and prosperity of Gangetic plain. The numerous rivers fed by the glaciers of the Himalayas act as an inexhaustible and perennial source of water. The rivers too, are powerful determinants in the life of a country.

Indo-Gangetic plain

Next to the Himalayas is the Indo-Gangetic plain which figures prominently in the pages of history for being seats of many principal empires. The plain is about 4,80,000 squire kilometers, covering the most thickly populated area and the most fertile part of India. The region derives its strength from the rivers like Indus, Ganga and Brahmaputra and their tributaries. These rivers bring enormous loads of silt from the mountains and deposit them on the beds. The snow covered

Himalayas make a perennial supply of water to the northern plain for irrigation and agriculture. The Gangetic plain also includes the sandy deserts of Rajasthan and the Aravali mountain ranges. The Harappan and the Vedic civilizations flourished in this region. During Vedic times it was known as *Aryavarta*, the main seat of Indian civilization. The religions like Jainism and Buddhism also flourished here. It was the most thickly populated region of India. The snow fed rivers and the alluvial soil have sustained the teeming population.

The Indo-Gangetic plain extends from the delta of the river Indus to the delta of river Ganga and Brahmaputra.The river Indus with its tributaries plays an important part in the evolution of Indian culture. The Harappan culture developed on its banks. The Indus is to Sindh what the Nile is to Egypt or the Tigris and the Euphrates to the Mesopotamia valley. The holy river Ganga with its important tributaries is the backbone of the region. Haradwar, Allahabad, Gaya, Benaras etc. are places of pilgrimage on the banks of this river, which are visited by millions of pilgrims. The river Brahmaputra that flows through gigantic gorges passes through Assam and joins with Ganga at her mouth. The northeast is famous for the cultivation of tea, coffee and fruits.

The Vindhya Mountains, along with impenetrable forests of Dandakaranya and Mahakantaravana form the southern boundary of Gangetic plain beyond which the Aryans found it difficult to penetrate.

The Aravali mountain range divides Rajaputana (Rajasthan) into two unequal parts. On the northwest lies the Thar or the Great Indian Desert, which acted as a strong barrier against foreign invasion. Arid, hot and desolate it extends for 480 Km. Between Indus and Aravali; the area has two important cities, Jeysalmer and Bekaner.

The Gangetic plain has great religious and political importance. Number of holy places of Hinduism like Haradwar, Mathura, Allahabad, Benaras, Gaya, Kurukshetra and Buddhist places like Saranath, Gaya, Lumbini, Kosambi, Kusinagar are located in this region. Important ruling dynasties of India like the Nandas, Mauryas and Guptas flourished here. The Vedic culture, literature and religion originated and flourished here along with Buddhism and Jainism. Being the political headquarters of the country it had been frequented by foreign invaders beginning from the Persians and the Greeks up to the Europeans.

Deccan Plateau

The Deccan Plateau or the Peninsular India is a triangular tableland separated from the Indo-Gangetic plain by Vindhya and Satapura ranges and the impenetrable forests known as Dandakaranya and Mahakantaravana. The Deccan (meaning south) is flanked by the Eastern Ghats (Mahendra) and the Western Ghats (Sahyadri), which meet at Nilgiris (Blue mountain) with Dodo Betta peak at a height of 2,637 metres. Beyond it are the Cardamom Hills, which may be recorded as the continuation of the Western Ghats. There is a small gap of about 35 kilometers broad, between the Nilgiri and Cardamom Hills, which provides an easy access from Coromondel coast to Malabar Coast i.e. from east to west, which is known as the Coimbatore or Palaghat gap. Geologically the Deccan Plateau is older than the Himalayas and more so than the Gangetic plain. The nucleus of the Peninsula is a triangular block of very old rock that cover its greater part from the Satmala – Ajanta ranges to the Nilgiris. The Deccan plateau has a general elevation of 600 mtrs. and the general slope is towards south-east. The Peninsula narrows down towards the south and at last meet at Cape Camorin or Kanyakumari, the southernmost point of India. The Western Ghats is a continuous steep mountain wall running parallel to the shores of Arabian Sea for about 1140 kilometers and 925 to 2475 meters high above sea level. The narrow strip of land of generally 50 to 80 kilometers but at places not more than 7.5 kilometers between the Arabian Sea and Western Ghats is known as Konkon coast up to Goa and then as Malabar Coast up to Kerala. The area is highly fertile and rich with coconut trees. There are a number of flat-topped peaks, converted into impregnable fortresses, which played important role in the Maratha history.

The Eastern Ghats are irregular, scattered, broken and of much lower altitude than the Western Ghats. The land between the Bay of Bengal and the Eastern Ghats known as the Coromandal Coast is much broader than the Konkon coast.

The Deccan Plateau is known as *Dakshinapatha* and its inhabitants as Dravidians. As a homogenous unit, isolated from the rest of India it enjoyed centuries of peace, prosperity and plenty. Important ruling dynasties like Chola, Chalukya and Hoysala have flourished here. The Sangam literature has enriched the literary horizon of the region. When Muslims invaded north India, the major religions of India, Hinduism along with Buddhism and Jainism sought refuse in the south and flourished luxuriantly.

The vast coastline and the natural harbours of the Peninsula provided outlet to the people for overseas trade and consequent colonization. They sailed to the South-east Asia, Rome, Egypt, and Arabia for trade and commerce. Situated on the midway of the maritime routes between Africa and China it had brisk contact with both the sides and had a large share in the colonization of the South-east Asia.

The principal rivers of the region, Mahanadi, Godavari, Krishna (with its tributary Tungabhadra) and Kaveri flow into the Bay of Bengal whereas Tapti and Narmada flow westward and drain into the Arabian Sea. The Deccan is more dependant upon the Monsoon wind than the Northern Plains, which has a number of rivers flowing from the Himalayas where the melting snows supply water during summer season. The Deccan Rivers don't have this advantage.

The Narmada rises in Amarkantaka and flows westward through Madhya Pradesh, Gujrat and falls in the Gulf of Cambay. Similarly, the Tapti rises at Multai in Satpura plateau and flowing westward falls in to the Gulf of Cambay. Mahanadi originates in Amarakantaka and falls in to the Bay of Bengal. Godavari rises at Nasik in Maharastra and falls in to the Bay of Bengal with its tributaries as the Wardha, the Penganga, the Wainganga, the Indravati and the Sabari. Krishna rises near Mahabaleswar and flowing through Karnatka and Andhra Pradesh falls in to the Bay of Bengal. The river Tungabhadra is its main tributary which again is the union of the rivers Tunga and Bhadra. Tungabhadra is one of the most important rivers of Indian history as it formed the frontier of the Chalukyas of Badami and Kalyani, the Rastrakutas, the Pallavas and the Cholas.

The river Kaveri rises at Brahmagiri in Coorg and flows towards Bay of Bengal. Below Srirangam it is divided into two Coleroon and Kaveri. It is considered as the Ganga of South India.

The two halves of India offer striking contrast in race, language and social customs. Very few rulers of India were able to exercise political supremacy over both the regions. Occasional attempts by rulers like Asoka, Samudragupta, Ala-ud-din Khilji, Mohammad Bin Tughlaq and Aurangzeb were made to bring north and south together under one political hegemony but in vain. The Arya-Dravida divide separates north India from south India since the beginning of Indian history.

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Diversity

Two distinctive features of India are its vastness and variety. Because of its vastness it is often called as a sub-continent. Its size is twenty times larger than Great Britain and as large as Europe excluding Russia. The population of some of the states is more than many important countries of the world. It presents one of the most remarkable arrays of geographical, climatic and attendant economic features with racial, linguistic and religious differences.

One is puzzled at her many contrasting features such as the splendours of her temples, mosques and tombs, alongside the squalor of her villages, the intellectual brilliance of the educated men and women at her top, side by side with ignorance and superstition of the bulk of people. The tribes living within kilometers of Rabindranath Tagore's last residence, Santi Niketan had no idea what so ever about *Gitanjali* or Nobel Prize. When Tagore was being awarded Nobel Prize for Literature, the Santhals living around Santi Niketan were still at food gathering stage.

Diversity in Physical Features

Apart from vastness with threefold natural division, its variety is partly due to its geography and physical features. The differences in altitude, climate, temperature, rainfall, flora and fauna are remarkable. The temperature of the country varies from the eternal snowy mountains to scorching heat of Rajasthan desert. The rainfall varies from 7.5 cms to 1200 cms per year. The country contains land from arid desert to fertile plains. There are rivers, which contain water throughout the year. India offers all the three types of climate – the Polar, the Temperate and the Tropical. There are areas, which experience the extreme heat of the summer as well as the biting cold of the winter.

The physical divisions have led to difference in flora and fauna, animals and vegetables. The flora and fauna are represented here in almost all known varieties. If the Sunderbans of Bengal is famous for the royal Bengal Tiger, the forest of Malwas is known for its best breed of lions.

Within the three natural physical divisions of India, again, there have been sub-divisions caused by physical barriers, which have stood on the way of regional unity and affected the course of history. The great Thar desert intervening between the plains of the Indus and the valley of the Ganga has practically converted these two regions into two separate units. This has been detrimental to the unity of India.

Racial Diversity

It is an arduous task to construct the systematic ethnography of the teeming millions of Indian population. Different ethnic groups came to India as invaders, mingled with the Indian population and developed their own civilization and language. India contains a large variety of human types. The three primary broad types of mankind such as the Caucasian or white type, the Mongolian or yellow type and the Ethiopian or black type are found in India. As per the 1901 census the following eight different ethnic groups are found here.

1. Pre-Dravidian	2. Dravidian
3. Indo-Aryan	4. Turko-Iranian
5. Scytho-Dravidian	6. Arya-Dravidian
7. Mongoloid	8. Mongoloid-Dravidian

India has been described as an ethnological museum. Race formation is a dynamic process and the environmental stimuli have caused many changes in the ethnic types. However, it is said, "The bridge which links the Pathans of North west to the hill tribes of Travancore is still in existence". There are primitive tribesmen as well as city dwellers. There is a wide variety of difference in physical features, complexion and even in language. Often the linguistic terms like Aryan and Dravidian have been applied to ethnic units. It is difficult to assume that this vast subcontinent was once a vacuum and the races have migrated into this ethnological paradise from far away places. There have never been attempts to ascertain how far India bred her own races.

Linguistic Diversity

The ethnological differences gave rise to a large number of languages. The linguistic survey of India shows as many as 179 languages and 544 dialects in India. Among the Dravidian languages, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam are popular. Similarly, among the north Indian languages, Hindi, Bengali, Gujrati, Punjabi, and Urdu are prominent. Even the Constitution of India recognizes 18 languages in the country. Many foreign languages like Arabic and Persian are also in operation.

Religious Diversity

All the main religions of the world are found here along with the religions, which are born here. Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Islam, Sikhism etc. are seen in India. All these religions have grown freely along with their sects. Many beliefs, superstitions, dogmas, cults and their Gods and Goddesses are worshipped here. Hinduism, the religion of the majority has a number of cults and creeds as Vaishnavism, Saivism, Shaktism, Tantricism, Ganapatya cult, Sun cult etc. There have been religious reformers like Kabir, Nanak and Chaitanya who have preached synthesis of religions. The primitive tribes have their own religion separate from others. Various fairs and festivals are observed in different parts of the country. Even the Hindus differ largely on observance of fairs and festivals.

Political Diversity

The political history of India resolves itself into separate histories of the regions. Local and regional chauvinism always inspired the rulers to fight among themselves. The lack of unity among the Indian rulers encouraged invaders to attack it. During later Vedic period, north India was divided into number of

Janapadas of which 16 *Mahajanapadas* figure prominently. Some of the regions like the extreme south never came under northern rule and always remained independent under local dynasties. Even in the face of foreign invasion or common enemy the Indian rulers did not unite. There has never been a strong central government ruling over entire country with a single administrative system. Glorification of local rulers has always encouraged separatist tendency. Internal dissension and foreign invasions were chiefly responsible for the political disunity and fragmentation of the country.

The natural barriers of hills and rivers largely determined the different political and cultural units into which India was divided. These natural divisions favoured the growth of local and regional spirit and fostered separatist tendencies.

The marked distinction between north India and south India dominated the political history of the country. Each of these regions frequently achieved political unity though unity between the two of the regions was rendered more difficult. The people of south India always abhorred the north and protested under slightest pretext.

Certain regions have always waged heroic struggle for independence against heavy odds. The Rajputs, the Sikhs and the Marathas for example have always fought against the imperial power of Delhi. This was as much due to the nature of their land as to the bravery of the people.

The physical features, natural barriers and strategic positions almost made some kingdoms, small or big as little world by itself. An Indian ruler inspite of his potentiality and ambition had least temptation for the comparatively unknown regions beyond the high hills and seas. During the days when scientific knowledge and modern means of communication were lacking it took months for the army to reach the frontiers. Even the news of revolts in borders reached the rulers after weeks or even months. Today we have the unifying factors like the Indian Railways, the Indian Airlines, the Posts and Telegraphs and such others symbols of national unity, which did not exist in the past.

Cultural Diversity

The variations in climatic condition, land structure and political set up have resulted in considerable differences in dress, food habit and social customs and practices. The dress of the people of Rajasthan due to heat is bound to differ from that of the people of Kashmir due to cold. The people of south under Saivite influence put sandal marks on their forehead whereas the people of north under Vaishnavism were more liberal and catholic. The Hindu society as such is divided into a number of castes or *varnas* with well-defined functions for each *Varna.*

A modern writer has attempted a vivid portrayal of the diversities in India as, "Everybody looks different and dresses differently. Complexions range from white to black coffee, nose from Biblical spurs to Mongolian pugs; some people are very tall, others very short. Dress, like a botanical classification, reveals the exact identity of the bearer, his or her religion caste, region and occupation. The variety is endless".

UNITY

Inspite of the diversities in different fields – physical, social, linguistic, cultural and religious – India as described by V. A. Smith has a "Fundamental Unity" and that is what has held such a vast nation together for thousands of years. The simple explanation of common heritage is not enough. The answer lies in the overwhelming impact of Hinduism on the Indian minds.

Sir Herbert Risley has observed, "Beneath the mani-fold diversity of physical and social type, language, custom and religion which strikes the observer in India, there can still be discerned a certain underlying uniformity of life from the Himalayas to Cape Camorin." India represents a remarkable diversity out of which a unity has evolved. Some prefer to describe it as the expression of basic and original unity in its various manifestations. Unity has gradually evolved out of diverse and often contending elements.

Geographical Unity

In studying the cultural development of any country, the importance of its geography can hardly be minimized. In the early periods of human history, geography determined to, a great extent the lives and activities of people, their thought and literature. History of India is no exception to this. Geographically India remains a single unit, separated from the rest of the world by inviolable boundaries. The vastness of the country earns the title of a sub-continent. Geographically it is isolated from the world by Himalayas in the north, the Bay of Bengal in the east, the Arabian Sea in the west and the Indian Ocean in the south. Hence, since the beginning the isolated region has developed an independent identity of its own. The geographic factors like the mountain ranges, the river systems, the monsoon winds, the climatic conditions all together act as unifying forces. The size and variety of India is no proof against its unity. On the contrary, it is a source of vitality, strength and richness even though it is difficult to discover 'One in Many', 'the Individual in the Aggregate' and 'the Simple in the Composite'.

Physical Unity

From the very beginning many foreigners have settled in India. The Aryans, the Sakas, the Kushanas, the Scythians and the Hunas during ancient India, the Muslims during the medieval period who have come to India and settled here have gradually lost their separate individuality and have been completely absorbed into the fold of Indianness. All these different races and tribes have acquired a sort of physical uniformity and now differ in many essential points from their brethren living outside India. The all India character and a general Indian personality have gradually evolved.

Political Unity

The name *Bharatavarsha* or the land of Bharata continues to apply to the whole of India since the hoary past. This name has applied to the entire country in the Epics and *Puranas.* The term *Bharatavarsha* symbolizes fundamental unity. The name together with the sense of unity that it imparted "was ever present before the minds of the theologians, political philosophers and those who spoke of the thousand *Yojanas* (leagues) of land that stretches from the Himalayas to the sea as the proper domain of a single universal emperor."

The glorious one nation theory is contained in the expressions like *Bharatmata* (Mother India), *Janani Janmabhumischa Swargadapi Goriyasi* (Mother and motherland are greater than heaven), *Vande Mataram* (Hail mother) etc. all of which apply to entire India.

Though political unity was rarely achieved, the ambitious rulers of ancient, medieval and modern India always longed for it. The frequent use of the royal titles like *Chakravarti, Sarbabhauma Samrat, Ekrat, Rajadhiraj* and the performance of Vedic sacrifices like *Rajasuya, Vajapeya* and *Aswamedha* indicate the concept of unity under one ruler. Rulers like Chandragupta Maurya, Asoka, Samudragupta during ancient period and Ala-ud-din Khilji, Mohammad Bin Tughlaq and Aurangzeb during medieval period and the British during modern period have made successful attempts to rule over north and south together under one administration though for brief periods. However, the Mughals and the British almost achieved the political unity of India by a centralized administrative system, uniform laws and uniform official language.

The popular view about the lack of political unity in India ignores its vastness of area and the natural barriers that tend to separate its different regions. When we deplore political unity it is normally compared with the smaller kingdoms like Egypt, Babylonia and Assyria. Not only that they were very small in size as compared to India but also there was not a single kingdom in Europe and Asia during ancient period as large as Magadha.

A considerable part of Indian history is a chronicle of attempts to setup stable empires over the whole of the country, the impulse to which was partly caused by political ambition but the most important aspect was the common consciousness of the cultural and geographical unity of India.

Kingdoms and empires, no doubt rose and fell like waves in the ocean. Intermittent foreign invasions did take place but foreign invaders who held temporary sway over smaller regions and were soon absorbed within the body politic never permanently impaired the political integrity of the nation. The political vitality of India was as much due to external circumstances as to internal strength. The Greeks, the Scythians, the Huns were mere oceanic waves breaking on the Indian shore not the tides that had internal momentum to flood the entire country. Such a tide had come only once in ancient India i.e. the Aryan immigration when India was completely conquered and transformed.

Religious Unity

The overwhelming impact of Hinduism on the Indian minds can be considered as the single most important unifying factor. India is a land of diverse religious faiths. But the influence of Hinduism easily transcends that of any other religion. It is mainly due to the all-comprehensive and all-embracing pervasiveness of Hinduism. Like Christianity in Europe, Hinduism in India has provided an attitude and way of thinking, which is shared and cherished even by the people of other religions. Hinduism, as Dr. Radhakrishnan described it is "a mosaic of almost all types of stages of religious aspiration and endeavour".

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The worship of Hindu Gods and Goddesses is widespread in north as well as in south India. The epics like the *Ramayan* and the *Mahabharata* continue to be studied with equal zeal throughout the country. Originally written in Sanskrit, these have been translated into different languages. The holy places and centres of religion are spread over the entire India making it obligatory for the people to visit these places. The Saivites worship 12 *Jyotirlingas* (effulgent *lingas*), the Saktas have 52 *pithas* and the Vaishnavites have numerous *pithas* throughout India. From Kanchipuram in the south, Dwarka in the west, Badrinath in the north and Puri in the east (chartudham) the whole country is dotted with a network of holy places, which foster a sense of unity.

The daily prayer of Hindus includes seven sacred rivers like Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswati, Godavari, Narmada, Sindhu and Kaveri from different parts of the country. Another prayer enlivens the country as the land of seven sacred cities, Ayodhya, Mathura, Haradwar (Maya), Varanasi (Kasi), Kanchi, Ujjain (Avantika) and Dwarka (Dvaravati) representing different regions. The four holy lakes; Bindu, Pampa, Narayan and Manasa and seven mountains (Kulachala) Mahendra, Malaya, Sahyah, Suktimat, Rksa, Vindhya and Pariyatra are spread over entire India.

The religious concepts like monotheism, immortality of soul, re-incarnation, *karma, nirvana, moksha* etc. inspire the people throughout the length and breadth of the country. Religious rites and rituals have uniformity throughout the country. The sages and saints, the religious preachers and the pilgrims have never differentiated between the north and south. If Shankaracharya carried the message from south to north, Buddhism and Jainism spread from north to south. Chitanya, Kabir and Nanak formed the connecting link among various regions of the country.

Linguistic Unity

The binding force of Hinduism is the use of Sanskrit language. It was not only used, as the language of the religion but was the official and court language of many ruling families of north as well as south for more than two thousand years. Ancient India has bequeathed to us a vast treasury of texts representing the intellectual and literary activities of the entire country for thousands of years. Though India has more than 500 spoken dialects, yet it has only one sacred language, revered by one and all. The Gupta rulers used Sanskrit not only as court language but also as the spoken language inside the royal palace of Ujjain. Sanskrit has been the original source of different languages of the country like Hindi, Marathi, Gujrati, Bengali etc. Even the southern languages like Telugu, Tamil Kannada and Malayalam could not escape the influence of Sanskrit.

With the spread of Buddhism and Jainism, Pali and Prakrit used to spread over entire India as the language of these two religions. There have been continuous efforts for the linguistic unity of the country. The Asokan Inscriptions were written in Prakrit language and Brahmi script at different places of the country. With the advent of the British, English became the official language throughout the country. What Sanskrit had done in the past, the English language tried to achieve during modern period. In the recent times, Hindi through its three-language formula is trying to achieve linguistic unity.

Cultural Unity

Beneath the manifold diversities there was a fundamental unity among the Indians from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. The distinctive type of culture introduced since the Vedic times in its abounding vitality has always acted as a unifying bond. There has been a basic unity of literary ideas, philosophy, outlook, conventions, and practices throughout the country. The fairs, festivals, religious ceremonies, dance, drama and music all are products of the same background in north as well as south. The sanctity of the family, the caste system, the social *samskaras* are also same everywhere.

A remarkable feature of ancient Indian culture has been the commingling of cultural elements from north and south. The Aryan elements are equated with the Vedic and Sanskritic culture of the north and the pre-Aryan with the Dravidian and Tamil culture of the south. Many Dravidian and non-Sanskritic terms occur in the Vedic texts. Similarly, many Pali and Sanskrit terms signifying ideas and institutions of north appear in the earliest Tamil texts called 'Sangam Literature'.

The concept of unity as developed in India can be understood only in the context of the working of Indian mind. It is related to an attitude, an approach to life and environment, a way of possessing a distinct set of moral and mental qualities and a sense of values. This has persisted throughout the ages, surviving the onslaught of all sorts of influences, external as well as internal. Jawaharlal Nehru observed, "Unity was not conceived as something imposed from outside, a standardization of externals or even beliefs. It was something deeper and within its fold, the widest tolerance of belief and custom practised and every variety acknowledged and even encouraged". These assimilating and all-absorbing attributes of Indian minds on the one hand and the acceptance of a common sense of values on things essential, and outlook on life on the other, have presented to the Indians a distinctive and integral character of their own, marking them out from the rest of the people of the world.

The Indian culture is an organic and harmonious synthesis of a large number of human cultural trends and imperatives. It has a unique individuality of its own which defies confusion. Different peoples have come to India from the earliest times and have cooperated in building up a great culture, which does not seek to exclude anything and is all-inclusive. It does not have an attitude to deny any people its right of self-expression. All the external influences have been welded into the vast synthesis wherein their essential elements have been preserved. The motto of Indian culture has always been expressed in the Rigvedic dictum '*Ekam Sad, Viprabahudha Vadanti*' meaning Truth is one; the sages only call it variously. Hence, it is almost a confederation of cultures. As a matter of fact the great culture of India is basically a synthesis of cultures, material, intellectual and spiritual.

Chapter - 2

POLITICAL CONDITION OF NORTH INDIA DURING SIXTH CENTURY B.C.

The sixth century B.C. marks a turning point in the Indian history. The political history of India practically begins from the sixth century B.C. According to R.C. Majumdar, "Our knowledge of the political history becomes more precise and definite form the 6th century B.C. and we can clearly perceive how the stage was gradually set for the rise of the great Magadhan empire which constitutes the most distinguished feature of the succeeding period". During this time the tribal political organizations of the Vedic period gave rise to the formation of large states with towns as their seats of power. There was no paramount power in north India during 6th century B.C. The entire region was divided into a number of independent states, resulting in the loss of unity and strength. They were often engaged in internecine struggle. The Ganga-Yamuna valley i.e. modern Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh region witnessed the concentration of powers. The period was remarkable for various forms of government. Although monarchy was the most important form of government yet self-governing republics or oligarchies also existed. Different forms of government were experimented during this period. The century became famous for the birth of two new religions in India such as Buddhism and Jainism, propagated by Gautama Buddha and Vardhaman Mahavira respectively. The prolonged prevalence of the Vedic features in the society and the subsequent corruption and misinterpretation of facts gave rise to a spiritual awakening and the birth of new religions.

SOURCES

Three different categories of sources i.e. the Buddhist sources, the Jaina sources and the Brahmanical sources provide us information on the political condition of India during the sixth century B.C. The Buddhist text Anguttara Nikaya states that there existed sixteen great states *Sodasa Mahajanapadas* in north India during that time. They were Kasi, Kosala, Anga, Magadha, Vajji (Vrijji), Malla, Chedi, Vamsa (Valsa), Kuru, Panchala, Matsya, Surasena, Asaaka (Asmaka), Avanti, Gandhara and Kamboj. These *Mahajanapadas* were generally named after the people who lived there. The Digha Nikaya II *(Janavasabha Suttanta)* refers to the *Mahajanapadas* in pairs such as Kasi-Kosala, Vajji-Malla, Chedi-Vamsa, Kuru-Panchal, and Matsya-Surasena. The Chullaniddesa adds Kalinga to the list and substitutes Yona for Gandhara. The Mahavasta makes a slight change and omits Gandhara and Kamboj instead mentions Sivi and Sasarna respectively.

The Buddhist texts refer to the existence of some non-monarchical (Republican or Oligarchical) clans such as Sakyas of Kapilavastu to which Gautama Buddha belonged, Mallas of Pava and Kusinara, Lichchhavis of Vaisali, Moriyas of Pippalivana, Videhas of Mithila, Koliyas of Ramagama, Bulis of Allakappa, the Kalamas of Kesaputta etc.

The Jaina Bhagavati Sutra otherwise called as Vyakhyaprajnapti mentions sixteen *Mahajanapadas* but with different names such as, Anga, Banga (Vanga), Magadha Malaya, Ladha, (Lata or Radha), Padha (Pandya), Vujji (Vajji), Moli (Malla), Kasi, Kosala, Avaha, Sambhuttara.

The Mahagovinda Suttanta mentions that Mahagovinda, the Brahmin chaplain of king Renu divided his empire into seven kingdoms with their capitals such as Kalinga with capital at Dantapura, Assaka with capital at Potana, Avanti with capital at Mahishmati (Mahissati), Sovina with capital at Roruka, Videha with capital at Mithila, Anga with capital at Champa and Kasi with capital at Varanasi.

The Brahmanic sources like the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Puranas etc have reference to these kingdoms. The Astadhyayi of Panini refers to the existence of Republics. He has called the Republics as the *Sangha* or *Gana* and the kingdoms as *Janapada*. The names of various kingdoms with little variations here and there have been mentioned in the Mahabharata,the Ramayana, and a number of Puranas although some of these refer to the period before the sixth century B.C.

The variations in the list of names given by different sources might have occurred due to the difference in the geographical knowledge of the authors. Certain names like Kasi, Kosala, Anga, Magadha and Vajji have appeared as common names in all sources. However, of all sources the list given by the Buddhist source Anguttara Nikaya has been universally accepted because that is the only source which exclusively refers to north India while other sources include kingdoms form southern India and eastern India.

Hence, in conclusion it can be said that there existed large number of small and big states in North India during the sixth century B.C. Non-monarchical forms of government (Republican or Oligarchies) ruled over many of these states. And all these meant loss of political unity and bitter internecine wars. With the progress of time small kingdoms gave way to greater ones, more powerful ones conquered weaker states. Hence, the list did not remain constant forever. Gradually some kingdoms like Magadha defeated others and extended their political hegemony. The monarchical states were generally concentrated in the Gangetic plain whereas the republican states were situated in the Himalayan region. The frequent occurrence of internecine wars not only brought political instability but also greatly affected the economic condition of the people. The progress and welfare activities were affected. People of all walks of life must have experienced the bad effects of such a situation.

As stated earlier the tribes that lived in *Mahajanapadas* gave it its name. But some of these *Mahajanapadas* were big enough to be considered as home for one tribe only. Some of these had two capitals; meaning at least more than one tribe lived there, which ultimately led to the formation of confederacies. Kuru had two capitals, Hastinapura and Indraprastha. Panchala had two capitals Kampila and Ahichhatra and the likewise. Hence, probably each tribe had a ruler of its own.

Urban Centres

The sixth century B.C. was remarkable for the growth of urban centres in north India. Major cities such as Rajagriha (Magadha), Varanasi (Kasi), Kausambi (Vatsa), Sravasti (Kosala), Champa (Anga), Ujjain (Avanti), Taxila (Gandhara) etc. developed during this period. Almost all of them except Saketa were capitals of the respective *Mahajanapadas*. All these cities were well fortified with moats and ramparts in contrast to old towns like Hastinapur. Other important indicators for a well developed urban culture were punch marked coins and standardised weights and measures. The punch-marked coins have been found in almost all cities of the Gangetic valley.

SODASA MAHAJANAPADA

Kasi

Kasi was one of the powerful kingdoms. Its capital was Varanasi (Benaras), which was an important city. The Guttila Jataka describes Varanasi as the chief city of entire India. The rivers Varuna and Asi flew in the north and south of the capital city respectively giving rise to the name Varanasi. Many rulers of Kasi were powerful enough to aspire to become the lord of entire India (Sakalajambudhipati). In the Jaina sources Kasi has been described as the kingdom where Asvasena, the father of Jaina Tirthankara, Parsvanath ruled and died 250 years before Mahavira. Kasi as a kingdom has been in existence much before the sixth century B.C. It has been referred to in the Satapatha Brahmana and the Mahabharata etc. Being a powerful kingdom in the sixth century B.C. Kasi naturally picked up quarrel with its neighbouring kingdoms like Kosala, Anga and Magadha. There existed long rivalry between Kasi and Kosala for supremacy. Some time before Buddha, Kosala conquered Kasi.

Kosala

The kingdom of Kosala roughly corresponds to modern Oudh region. The river Sadanira (Gandaka) bound it on the east, Panchala on the west, the Sarpika or Syndika (Sai) river on the south and Nepal hills on the north. The river Saraju divided the kingdom into two parts, north Kosala and south Kosala. Sravasti was the capital of north Kosala while Kusavati was the capital of south Kosala. There were other important cities like Ayodhya, Saketa and Sravasti. There were many minor towns like Setavya, Ukkattha and Kitagiri. The famous Ayodhya of Ramayana existed on the bank of the river Saraju. The famous rulers like Ikshvaku, Harischandra, Dasaratha and Rama, were associated with this kingdom. The rulers were proud of their descent from the legendary king Ikshvaku. Kosala was a mighty kingdom, which conquered its neighbouring territories like Kapilavastu, Kasi and Magadha.

The Kasi-Kosala tussle, which lasted for centuries, came to an end with the conquest of Kasi by Kosala in the 6th century B.C. King Mahakosala, was a powerful ruler of Kosala. His son and successor Prasenjit, a contemporary of Buddha was more powerful than his father. Prasenjit fought a prolonged war against Ajatasatru of Magadha in which finally he had to admit defeat. However, Kosala became one of the four important kingdoms of north India during the 6th century B.C. Although Prasenjit was not a Buddhist yet he was a great admirer of Buddha.

Anga

The kingdom of Anga corresponds to the modern Bhagalpur and Monghyr districts of east Bihar. Its capital was Champa. It existed at the confluence of the rivers Malini (modern Chandana) and the Ganga. According to Digha Nikaya the city of Champa was considered as one of the six principal cities of India of the contemporary period (the other five being Rajagriha, Sravasti, Saketa, Kausambi and Varanasi).

The city was a port town and acted as a great centre of trade and commerce. Ships from Champa sailed to Suvarnabhumi in the trans - Gangetic region. The traders from Anga to southern Anaam and Cochin China might have named their settlement as Champa after the name of their capital city. Two important rivers i.e. the river Malini and the Ganga were the lifeline of the kingdom. There was a big lake named Gaggara near the capital city. The river Malini separated Anga from Magadha. Besides the city of Champa, Bhaddiya (Bhadrika) and Assapura (Asvapura) were two other important cities.

There was constant rivalry between the two neighbours, Anga and Magadha with the rise and fall of fortunes on both sides. Even in some sources the famous city Rajagriha of Magadha has been described as a part and parcel of Anga. The names of the rulers of Anga like Dhatarattha, Dadhivahana and Brahmadatta have been mentioned in various sources. The Buddhist texts refer to a queen named Gaggara who gave her name to the famous lake in Champa. The Puranas describe Chandanda or Chandrabala as the daughter of Dadhivahana after whose name a river was named. About the middle of the sixth century B.C. Bimbisara, the crown prince of Magadha is said to have killed Brahmadatta, the last independent ruler of Anga. Thus came the end of Anga. Bimbisara resided at Champa as the viceroy of Magadha.

Magadha

The ancient kingdom of Magadha roughly corresponds to the modern Patna and Gaya districts of south Bihar. River Ganga formed its northern boundary and river Son its west. In the south there was the Vindhyan ranges and on the east the river Champa. Girivraja, situated around modern Gaya was its earliest capital. Later on it was renamed as Rajagriha. Situated in the midst of mountain ranges it was a well-fortified city protected by five hills. In the Ramayana, the name Rajagriha has been described as Vasumati. At a later date the capital was shifted to Pataliputra.

Magadha has not been duly described in the Vedic sources probably because it was not fully Aryanised (Brahmanised) during that time. Except the name of Pramaganda no king of Magadha has been mentioned in the Vedic literature. Therefore, it must have been Aryanised at a later stage.

Brihadratha, the father of Jarasandha and the son of Vasuchaidya Uparichar founded the earliest dynasty of Magadha. He is said to have founded the capital city Girivraja. The name Brihadratha has been mentioned twice in the Rigveda but without reference to his association with Magadha. The Puranas give a list of Brihadratha kings form the time of Sahadeva, the son of Jarasandha upto Ripunjaya. The famous king Prasenjit comes seventh in the list from Sahadeva. The Brihadratha dynasty came to an end in the 6th century B.C.

Bimbisara, a contemporary of the Buddha, founded the second Magadhan dynasty, the Haryanka kula during the 6th century B.C. In some Buddhist texts Bimbisara has been described as a scion of Sisunaga dynasty. But it seems that Sisunaga dynasty was an independent dynasty coming after the Haryanka kula and was founded by Sisunaga. During the time of Ajatasatru, the son and successor of Bimbisara, Magadha acquired great political importance. His son Udayan shifted his capital from Rajagriha to Pataliputra.

Magadha was the first *Mahajanapada* from the list of the sixteen *Mahajanapadas* of the 6th century B.C. that made successful attempts to establish a vast empire. It had the distinction of having a number of successful dynasties like the Haryanka, the Sisunaga, the Nanda and the Maurya with a long list of powerful rulers to establish a vast empire. The use of diplomacy and force to defeat the enemy was an interesting feature of the Magadhan imperialism. During the time of Ajatasatru both Mahavira and Buddha died. After the death of Buddha the Buddhist council was held at Rajagriha to give shape to the Buddhist scriptures.

Chedi

The Chedi or Cheti was one of the most ancient tribes, which lived in different parts of India during different periods of history. In the 6th century B.C. they had two distinct settlements one in Nepal and the other roughly in the eastern part of modern Bundelkhand

and its adjoining areas. In the Mahabharata the capital of Chedis has been described as Suktimati or Suktisahvaya. The Jatakas give the name of the capital as Sotthivatinagara. The river Suktivati used to flow through the capital. The other important towns were Sahajati and Tripuri. In the Rigveda the Chedi king Kasuchaidya has been described with dignity. In the Mahabharata the famous king Sisupala son of Damoghosh has been described as a Chedi ruler. The Jatakas give a long list of Chedi kings beginning with the legendary king Mahasamanta Mandhata. Upachara was one of the Chedi kings who had five sons. Each son is said to have founded a city after his own name such as Hattipura, Assapura, Sihapura, Uttarapanchala and Daddarapura.

Later on the Chedis spread to different parts of India. A branch of Chedis founded a royal dynasty in Kalinga.

Vatsa

The kingdom of Vatsa was situated along the banks of Yamuna in the Allahabad region. Its capital was Kausambi or modern Kosam near Allahabad. The kingdom was famous for its association with dynasties like the Kuru and the Bharata. The capital city was a very prosperous city with flourishing trade and commerce. The kingdom was famous for the production of high quality cotton fabrics. Udayana, a great ruler ruled over the country during the 6th century B.C. His rivalry with king Pradyota of Avanti was the subject matter of many literary writings. He himself was a hero of many dramas like the Swapnabhassavadatta of Bhasa, Priyadarshika and Ratnavali of Harsha.In the

Meghaduta of Kalidas the legendary description of Udayana can be seen.

Udayana was not favourably inclined towards Buddhism in the beginning. It is said that in a drunken rage he severely tortured a Buddhist monk Pindola. Later on the saint Pindola converted him to Buddhism. His son and successor was Bodhi.

Kuru

The kingdom of Kuru existed near modern Delhi with its capital at Indraprastha (Indapatta). In the Mahasutasoma Jataka, the extent of the kingdom has been described as 100 leagues and that of the capital as 7 leagues. The Kurus had a reputation for deep wisdom and sound health. Hastinapura was another important city. Besides these two important cities there were a number of *nigamas* or small towns such as Varanavata, Kundi, Thullakotthita and Kammassadamma. During the time of Buddha the contemporary Kuru king is described as Isukara. However after him the kingdom became politically insignificant.

Panchala

The kingdom of Panchala corresponds to modern Badaun, Farukhabad and Barelly districts of Uttar Predesh. It extended from the northeast Delhi up to the foothill of the Himalayas. It was divided into two parts, the Uttarpanchala (north) and the Dakshinapanchala (south) with the river Ganga flowing as the dividing line. The capital of Uttarpanchala was Ahichchhatra or Adhichchhatra or Adisadra (modern Ramnagar in Barelly district). The capital of Dakshinapanchala was Kampilya or Kampil (modern Farukhabad district). Kanyakubj or Kanauj was one of the famous cities of the kingdom. King Chulani Brahmadatta of Panchala has been mentioned in the Ramayana, the Uttaradhyayana Sutra, the Swapnabhasavadatta and the Mahaunmagga Jataka. In the Uttaradyayana Sutra one Sanjaya has been described as the king of Kampilya who renounced his throne and became a Jaina. Originally a monarchical kingdom, Panchala formed a Sangha for the Republican Corporation since 6th century B.C.

Matsya

The Matsya or Machcha kingdom corresponds to modern Jaipur region, which included the whole of the present territory of Awar with a portion of Bharatpur. Its capital Viratanagara (modern Bairat in Jaipur) was named after its founder king Virata. The Matsyas are usually associated with the Surasenas. The Upper Matsya (western Matsya) was probably a hill tract on the bank of Chambal. There is reference to a kingdom called Viramatsya in the Ramayana. During later period, the Matsya branch has been found in the Vizagpatnam region. The Mahabharata refers to a king named Sahaja who ruled over the Matsyas as well as the Chedis. During the 6th century B.C. the kingdom had lost political importance. After the 6th century B.C., it was conquered by Magadha. Some of the most famous inscriptions of Asoka are found at Bairat.

Surasena

The kingdom of Surasena had its capital at Madhura or Mathura on the banks of the river Yamuna. The kingdom has not been mentioned in the Vedic literature. The Greek writers refer to the Sourasenoi with its capital at Methora (Mathura). In the Mahabharata and the Puranas the ruling family of Mathura has been described as belonging to the Yadu family called as the Yadavas. Yadu and his family have been repeatedly mentioned in the Rigveda. In the Puranas the Krishna Vasudeva family is associated with Mathura. During the time of Vasudeva-Krishna the Vrishnis, Andnakas, Mahabhojas and some other tribes formed a Sangha with Krishna-Vasudeva as its head (*Sangha Mukhya*).

The Buddhist texts refer to Avantiputra as the king of Surasena through whose efforts Buddhism gained ground in and around Mathura. The name Avantiputra itself suggests a matrimonial relation between Avanti and Surasena. The Surasenas continued to exist as a respectable people down to the time of Meghasthenes after which they got merged with Magadha.

Asvaka

Assaka, Asmaka or Asvaka has not yet been identified. Some scholars have identified Asvaka with Maharastra, while others identify it with the kingdom of Assakenoi in the Swat valley of Sindhu basin. The Markandeya Purana and the Brihat Samhita place Asvaka in the northwest. The early Buddhist texts refer to Assaka as a *Mahajanapada* with its capital at Patana or Potali or Podana possibly identified with Bodhan in the Nizam's dominion. Assaka was situated on the banks of the river Godavari. Hence Assaka of the Buddhist text becomes a south Indian kingdom. The river Godavari separated Assaka from the neighbouring kingdom of Mulaka or Alaka. There was constant rivalry among the neighbours with one occupying the other and the vice versa. In the Sona-Nanda

Jataka, Assaka is described as a neighbour of Avanti, which means the territory in between Assaka and Avanti Mulaka, formed a part and parcel of Assaka.

In the Vayupurana Asmaka and Mulaka appear as scions of Ikshvaku family. Mahabharata refers to sage Asmaka as having founded the city of Podana. The Mahagobinda Suttanta mentions king Brahmadatta, the king of Assaka as being a contemporary of Sattabhu, king of Kalinga, Vessabhu, king of Avanti, Bhanata, king of Sovira, Renu, king of Videha, Dhatarattha, king of Anga and Dhatarattha king of Kasi. The Chulakalinga Jataka mentions a king of Assaka named Aruna and his minister as Nandisena and refers to a victory, which he won over Kalinga.

Avanti

Avanti was an important kingdom of western India. It roughly corresponds to the Ujjain region together with a part of the Narmada Valley from Mandhata to Maheswar region. The Jaina sources of later years include within its boundary the Tumbavana or Tumain in the Guna district of Gwalior. The Vindhya Mountain and the river Vetravati divided the kingdom into two parts, the Dakshinapatna with Mahisamati or Mahissati as its capital and northern part with its capital at Ujjain. Ujjain was a great cultural as well as a commercial centre. The river Sipra flew through the north while Narmada washed the southern part. There were several other cities like Avanti, Kuraraghara, Makkarkata and Sudarsanapura. The Mahagovinda Suttanta refers to its capital as Avanti and the name of a king as Vessabhu. The Puranas describe the Haihayas as the first dynasty of Mahisamati. The Haihayas were a powerful family who overthrew the Nagas of Narmada region.

During the time of Buddha, Chandra Pradyot Mahasena (Pajjota) was the ruler of Avanti. Avanti was an important centre of Buddhism. Pradyota the son of Pulika was a powerful king who bravely fought against the neighboring kingdoms of Vatsa, Magadha, Kosala etc. According to Buddhist texts Ajatasatru fortified his capital city Rajagriha as he apprehended an invasion by Pradyota. His tittles like Chandra and Mahasena describe him as a cruel ruler. Sisunaga was the last ruler of the family ruling after around 100 years of Chandrapradyota. He was defeated and Avanti was merged with the kingdom of Magadha by 4th century B.C.

Gandhara

The kingdom of Gandhara included the modern districts of Peshawar and Rawalpindi. Its capital was Takshasila or modern Taxila, which was a centre of trade and learning. The city of Takshasila was about 2000-league form Banaras. The territory of Gandhara often included Kaspapyrous or Kasyapapura (Kashmir) as a part and parcel of the kingdom. In mid sixth century B.C. Pukkusati (Pushkarasanin) of Gandhara was a contemporary of Bimbisara of Magadha. He is said to have sent an Ambassador to Bimbisara. He fought a war against Chandra Pradyota of Avanti and defeated him. In the later half of the sixth century B.C. Gandhara was occupied by Persia. In the Behistana inscription of Darius the people of Gandhara have been described as subjects of the Achaemenian Empire.

Kamboja

Kamboja as a kingdom was usually associated with Gandhara in the literature and the inscriptions.

Kamboja occupied roughly the province around Rajaori or ancient Rajapura including the Hazara district of the northwest Frontier Provinces possibly extending upto Kafiristan. Rajpura was the capital of Kamboja, which has been referred to by Hiuen Tsang. It lay to the south or southeast of Punch. The Mahabharata mentions the names of two kings of·Kamboj as Chandravarmana and Sudakshina. In the earlier period Kamboj had a monarchical form of government, which changed over to non-monarchical form or the Sangha type of government by the time of Kautilya.

Vriji

Vriji or Vajji was one of the sixteen *Mahajanapadas*, which had a Republican form of government with a Confederacy. It lay to the north of Ganges and extended as far as Nepal hills. Its western limit was the river Sadanira (Gandaka) that separated it from Malla and Kosala. In the east it extended upto the forest on the banks of the rivers Koshi and Mahananda.

The Vrijjian state is said to have been a Confederation of eight or nine clans (*Attahakula* or *Nabakula*) of which the Videhans, the Lichchhavis, the Jnatrikas and the Vajjis were the most important. The others were the Ugras, the Bhogas, the Kauravas and the Aikshvakas. The Videhans had their capital at Mithila, identified as the modern Janakapur in Nepal. They were the most important of all the clans. Earlier it was a vast kingdom under its philosopher king Janaka. During his time the capital city Mithila was the political and cultural centre of north India. The fall of Videha gave rise to formation of the Confederation and the Republic.

Lichchhavi

The most powerful of all the clans of Vajji Confederacy was the Lichchhavi clan. Vaisali, modern Basarh in the Muzaffarpur district of north Bihar was the capital of the Lichchhavis as well as the headquarters of the Vajjian Confederacy. The city of Vaisali has been described in various sources as a prosperous, populous and well-fortified city. A triple wall each with three gates and watchtowers protected the city.

The Lichchhavis were an indigenous Kshyatriya clan not Hinduised foreigners as described by V.A. Smith. V.A. Smith has described them to be of Tibetan origin. They were a war-like and independence loving people. They had taken the initiative in defeating the Videhan kingdom, which ultimately formed a part of the Confederation. References are plenty in the Buddhist texts about the war like qualities of the Lichchhavis. Even the mighty king Bimbisara of Magadha did not dare to cross sword with the Lichchhavis and entered into a friendly alliance by marrying the Lichchhavi princes Chellana. Ajatasatru who was a great warrior himself was also afraid of the Lichchhavis. He built a very strong fort to protect himself from the Lichchhavi invasion at Patali on the banks of river Ganga that later developed into the city of Pataliputra. However, Ajatasatru, adopted treacherous means to defeat the Lichchhavis. He sent his Chief Minister Vassamara to Vaisali to create dissention among the Lichchhavis after which he was able to defeat them. The Lichchhavis were on friendly terms with Kosala in general and Prasenjit in particular.

Vaisali, the capital of the Lichchhavis was connected with both Jainism and Buddhism. Trisala, the mother of Mahavira, the founder of Jainism was a

Lichchhavi princess. Mahavira was born at Kundagrama a suburb of the city of Vaisali. Similarly, the Lichchhavis were the ardent followers of Buddha. Buddha visited Vaisali several times and spent considerable amount of time in and around Vaisali. Vaisali had the distinction of being the venue of the second general council of Buddhist monks. The Jnatrikas were a clan with their seat at Kundagrama or Kundapura the suburb of Vaisali. This is the clan in which Mahavira was born.

Malla

Malla was another Republican state during sixth century B.C. It was divided into two parts with two capitals such as Kusavati or Kushinara and Pava. Kusinara has been identified with modern Kasia about 56 kms. east of Gorakhpur. Similarly Pava has been identified with the modern Padaraona 20 kms. to the north east of Kasia.

Malla was originally a Monarchical state, which later became a Republic like the Vajji Confederacy. The Mallas were great admirers of Buddha. Buddhism owes to the Mallas some of its greatest personalities such as Anand, Upali, Anuruddha, Devadatta and Khandasumana. Inspite of this, the Mallas also had great respect for Mahavira. The relationship between the Mallas and the Lichchhavis fluctuated continuously between friendship and hostility. The Mallas retained their independence till the death of Buddha after which Magadha occupied it.

OTHER REPUBLICAN STATES

Apart from the sixteen *Mahajanapadas* there existed few other Republican clans during 6th century

B.C. The Buddhist sources are replete with information on such Republics.

Sakyas

Among the smaller Republics the Sakya state was the most important. The birth of Goutam Buddha in this state further increased its importance. The Sakya state was bounded in the north by the Himalayas, on the east by the river Rohini on the west and south by the river Rapti. Its capital was Kapilavastu, identified with the modern Tilaura-kot in Nepal Tarai, about 15 kms north west of Piprahwa in the Basti district of Uttar Pradesh.

The Sakyas claimed their lineage as the solar race and from the Ikshvaku family of Kosala. The total Sakyan families numbered about 80.000. They had built a number of towns. Towards the end of 6th century B.C., Kosala annexed the Sakyas. The Sakyas had the system of marrying their own sisters.

The **Koliyas** of Ramagama were the eastern neighbours of the Sakyas. The river Rohini separated the two Republics. Normally, the relation between the two neighbouring Republics was generally friendly. But atleast once they quarreled over the distribution of the water of river Rohini to be used for irrigation purposes. The mediation of Buddha averted a major quarrel. However close matrimonial relationship existed between the two clans.

Very little is known about other clans. The **Bhaggas** of Sumsumaragiri (crocodile hill) were an old clan with reference in the Artreya Brahmana. Astadhyayi of Panini also mentions about them. Mahabharata and Harivamsa refer to close connection between Vatsas and Bhaggas. They were settled in the Vindhyan region between the Yamuna and the Son rivers. Towards the second half of 6th century B.C. the Bhagga state became an appendage of Vatsa kingdom.

The **Moriyas** of Pippalivana were another small clan on the Himalayan region who later played a very significant role in building the greatest empire of ancient India, as they were none other than the Mauryas of Magadha. They had their capital usually identified with Nyagrodhavana or Banyan grove, about 75kms. of Kusinara. The **Kalamas** of Kesoputta were settled on the banks of river Gomati. The famous philosopher Alora, one of the teachers of Buddha belonged to this clan. The **Bulis** of Alakappa were settled between Arah and Muzaffarpur District of Bihar.

The Constitution of the Republics and Non-monarchical States

The Buddhist literature, the writings of Panini, Mahabharata, Arthasastra etc. refer to the existence of the non-monarchical Republics during 6th century B.C. There doesn't exist enough evidence to say whether Republics existed during Vedic period or not? Puranas do not mention the Republics, may be due to the Brahmanical orthodoxy against the non-Brahmanical Republics. The Anguttara Nikaya, the Jatakas and the Jaina Bhagabati Sutra speak elaborately about the Republics during sixth century B.C. The historians of Alexander have referred to the Republics that gave him stiff resistance.

The non-monarchical states were called as the **Gana** or **Sangha**. These were broadly divided into two categories viz., **Oligarchic** and **Republican**. In a Republic the government was run by a democratic procedure under a constitution. In every sphere of life, political, social or economic the democratic procedure was applied. Emphasis was given on individual liberty.

The whole state was divided into a number of administrative units. The units on their turn enjoyed autonomy in local administration. An elected Chief or Raja ruled over each republican state. He ruled with the help of a Central Assembly consisting of elected representatives. The Assembly was presided over by the *Vinayadhara* who was elected for a fixed term. The Assembly used to meet frequently to discuss important matters. The sessions of the Assembly were held in the mote hall, called *Santhagara.* An officer called *Sabhapala* used to beat the drum to summon members to the Assembly hall. The whip was called *Gunapuraka.* Resolutions were passed by majority decision (*Yebhuyasikene*). Once passed, it was called as Act or *Karma-Vacha.* The most important aspect of this Assembly system was the open debate that was held on different issues. At times the matter was referred to a select committee called *Udvahika Sabha.*

Tickets (Salaka) consisting of slips of wood were distributed among the members for voting. Different colours of slips represented different opinions. Voting was done secretly. Polling officers used to collect these slips from the members confidentially. They were called *Salakagrahapaka.* There were three types of voting such as open voting (*Vivritakam*), by whispering (*Svakarna Jalapakam*) and secretly (*Guhyka*). Absentee members also could vote by proxy. The clerks (*Lipikas*) recorded the proceedings of the house.

The elders carried on the government in the Lichchhavi Confederation; each of whom had the title of

Raja. Hence the governing body of the Lichchhavis consisted of 7707 *Rajas* who represented various local units of Vaisali. Hence the title Raja was not used for kings but for Chiefs of local units. Besides the Rajas, there were as many *Uparajas* (Deputy Leaders), *Senapatis* (Generals) and *Bhandarganikar* (Treasuser). The *Samthagar* carried on the legislative functions. The executive functions were vested in the *Ashtakula* (Body of eight). The *Navakula* (Council of nine) was in-charge of foreign affairs. Another Council of eight was in-charge of justice.

According to Buddha the following were the strong points of a Republic (i) holding of frequent public discussions in the assemblies. (ii) to meet together in concord and act in concord (iii) to act in accordance with the established laws, (iv) respect for the elders, (v) supporting the ancient shrines, (vi) honouring the arhants and (vii) honouring the women. The real strength of the Republic lay in its benign government.

Monarchical form of Government

During the 6th century B.C. the most widely prevailing form of government was the monarchical form. Various kinds of rulerships were prevalent in different parts of India right from the Vedic period. The Artreya Brahmana, the Mahabharata and the Manusmriti mention about the divine right theory of kingship i.e. the kings were appointed in accordance with the desire of the God. In the Sutras and the Arthasastra the kingship has been described as being created through election by common consent or by popular choice. This theory resembles the social contract theory of Locke. Although both the forms of kingship were prevalent in ancient India yet the divine right of kingship was widely prevalent.

The Rig Vedic king called Rajan gradually started to assume high-sounding titles like Samrat, Ekrat, Svarat, Virat and Bhoja in due course. Kings were known with different names indifferent in regions. In the east they were called Samrat, in the west as Ekrat or Svarat, in the north as Virat and in the south as Bhoja. They offered various sacrifices, which gave them corresponding titles. A ruler who made Rajasuya sacrifice was called a Raja, a Vajapeya sacrifice made him Samrat and the Aswamedha sacrifice made him Lord Lords. Raja or Rajan was inferior to Samrat. The kings were usually, though not always, Kshatriyas. The Brahmins were considered unsuitable for kingship. However there are references to Brahmin kings, Sudra kings and even non-Aryan kings at different periods.

Kingship was generally hereditary. It is mentioned in the Satpatha Brahmana that some families continued to be kings for generations. But elective kingship was not unknown. Selection was made some times by the people and occasionally by the Ministers but always limited among the members of the royal family. The Jatakas provide information about the popular choice of the rules from outside the royal family.

The king was not the state but a part of it. There was a well-developed political system with limitation to the powers of the king. The state was conceived as an organic whole like a human body with seven limbs (**Saptanga theory**) of which the king was merely one and the six others as Ministers, Treasury, Army, Fort, Enemy and Friend. A consecration ceremony with elaborate rituals was held to install the king. Various sacrifices like *Vajapeya, Rajasuya, Aswamedha* were held to signify special divine sanction up on the king. There was no constitutional check on the king's power, yet he was not a despot. The protection of the people was the greatest Dharma (virtue) of the king. The office of the kingship was like a trust. As the Trustee, the king was expected to protect the people and work for their welfare. Qualifications were laid down for the king. He must have sound education, moral training, and control over his senses and must be free from vices. A king who did not have these qualifications or failed to discharge his duties properly was fit to be overthrown. Instances are there, when such kings were deposed or killed. The daily routine of the king was strictly prescribed.

The people were an important factor in the state. If the king failed to discharge his duties properly or became tyrannical the people could migrate from one kingdom to another. The learned Brahmins, wise Ministers and Hermits exercised sufficient control over the king's arbitrary power. No king could rule by antagonising these people.

The rise of large kingdoms saw the rise of the arbitrary power of the kings. When the simple tribal administrative structure broke down because of the vastness of the empire, the powers were centralised in the hands of the rulers. The powers of the *Sabha, Samiti*, Ministers etc. declined. The kings became supreme heads of the executive, legislative, judicial and military branches of administration. The people had to depend on the kings for protection from foreign invaders. The kings began to enjoy special honours and privileges.

It has been said that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Similarly many kings of ancient India did not observe high standard of duties expected of them. Hence, the search for alternative forms of government gave rise to the formation of non-monarchical States.

Chapter - 3

THE SIXTH CENTURY B.C. AND THE PROTESTANT RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

The Sixth century B.C. may be regarded as an important landmark in the history and culture of the world. During this period men's minds in widely separated different parts of the world were stirred by problems of religion and salvation. Mahavira and Gautam Buddha in India, Zoroaster in Iran, Heraclitus and Permaides in Greece and Confucius and Lao Tse in China, all unknown to one another propagated new religious theories. All of them asked many pertinent and penetrating questions against the existing system. All of them led protestant movements against the existing system and in most cases succeeded.

Religion played an important role in the lives of the Indians. During the 6th century B.C. preachers and wandering monks prepared the ground for the rise of some protestant religions in India. About this time the Vedic philosophy had failed to satisfy the masses. The dominant tendency was to escape from the formalism of Vedic religion and to question the utility of the rituals and the claim of the Brahmins to spiritual superiority. A great religious discontent was clearly visible. The old sacrificial religion of the Vedas had lost its appeal, the

Vedic Gods had ceased to satisfy the spiritual needs of the people. The philosophy of the *Upanisads* like the *Brahmam*, the *Atma* and other conceptions remained highly scholastic and out of the reach of the common man. The *Aryan Rishis* who were *aranyakas* instead of living among the common men and explaining to them the principles of Hinduism lived 'away from the madding crowd'.

Many of the preachers of the new religious ideologies expressed open disapproval of the ritual oriented religion, belief in the pantheon of numerous divinities, emphasis on several religious texts and domination of priestly class with rigid caste divisions. It is more than casual that nearly all the leaders of the unorthodox sects including Mahavira and Gautam Buddha were non-Brahmins.

The religious simplicity and social equality of the Rig Vedic period was lost during the later Vedic period. Religion had lost its inherent dynamic strength. Unnecessary rituals and dogmas dominated the system. Superstitions suppressed spirituality. Brahmins more often used religious beliefs for their personal gains and monopolized the study and practice of religion. Numerous religious ceremonies and meaningless costly practices including the animal sacrifice dominated the scene. The caste system was deliberately made rigid to keep non-Brahmins away from religion. Common man no longer understood the Vedic hymns. Study of Sanskrit was the monopoly of the Brahmins.

The vitriolic attack on animal sacrifice, in any form by Jainism and Buddhism assumed a new significance and became instantly popular. Buddha remarked that the *Aswamedha* and *Vajapeya* etc., which involved animal sacrifice, did not produce good results.

The protest movement mainly sprang up from the intellectual and spiritual tension. Discontent with the existing state of things and brooding over the sorrows and ills of life gave rise to the desire to remove them by finding new mode of salvation – "Old order changeth yielding place to new". There may be differences between Hinduism and the new religions but the fact remains that early Buddhism arose within Brahmanism minus its externals and the relative want of attention to the importance of conduct. There was no absolute or violent breach between the two faiths.

The changes in India during 6th century B.C. were not restricted only to the sphere of religion and philosophy; changes were also marked in the realm of politics and economy as well. The Indian history itself emerged out of legends and dubious traditions. Kings and kingdoms with known histories developed. The period witnessed new economic forces invigorated through the rapidly expanding commerce and increase in the number of artisans had its influence on society and economy.

The use of iron during 6th century B.C. around eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar ushered in a momentous change in the material life of the people. Many iron implements such as spearheads, daggers, lances, axes, nails and blades have been found from this region. The advance in metallurgy led to large-scale clearance on jungles and development of human settlements. This found opposition and resistance from the existing social setup.

The use of iron implements, progress in agriculture and phenomenal growth in trade and commerce resulted in the urbanization and growth of urban centers. Number of cities like Pataliputra, Kosambi and Vaisali developed which prepared the ground for bold and un-orthodox thinking. The urban centers were associated with certain features distasteful to the Brahmins like common eating-place and prostitution. The growth of trade and commerce gave rise to a new wealthy class in villages and towns, which caused economic inequalities and broke down the social order. Disparity between high and low led to the growth of untouchables in the society. It was a conflict between social status and wealth.

The later Vedic society was clearly divided into four *Varnas; Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya* and *Shudra.* Each *Varna* was assigned well-defined functions. The Varna ridden society was bound to generate tension. It was not merely a question of caste conflict but a conflict between the privileged and the unprivileged or the deprived sections. The *Brahmanas* who were given the functions of priests and teachers claimed the highest status in the society. They demanded several privileges including those of receiving gifts and exemption from taxes and punishment. They were placed in the category of *dwija* or twice born. They were entitled to wear the sacred thread and study the Vedas.

The *Kshatriyas* ranked second in the society. They fought and governed yet were subjected to Brahmin supremacy in every respect. The use of iron implements and the growth of urban centers added to their importance. The *Kshatriyas* as the warrior class became the protectors of the society. Some intelligent members of the ruling class, normally the *Kshatriyas* began to question the arrogant class pride and class exclusiveness of the Brahmins. Hence, it is not a mere coincidence that Mahavira and Gautam Buddha were *Kshatriyas*. The Buddhist text *Digha Nikaya* praises the *Kshatriyas*, as they were instrumental in bringing order and tranquility out of anarchy and chaos.

Brahmanical attitude towards trade was not encouraging. The trading community, the *Vaishyas* were given the third position after *Brahmanas* and *Kshatriyas* in the society. The wealth of the society was concentrated in their hands but they did not have social recognition or status. Hence, it is significant that the first lay converts of Buddhism came from the trading community. The *Vaishyas* looked for a religion that would improve their position. They extended generous support to both Mahavira and Gautam.

Trade in men, liquids, perfumes, cloth, leather and food-grains was prohibited. The people of Magadha and Anga (Bihar region) were despised because they carried on trade in some restricted items. Hence, as a mark of protest they were enthusiastic in embracing Buddhism.

The newly developed features of the social and economic life of the people did not fit into the Vedic culture. The conflict between the Vedic religious practices and the aspiration of the rising social groups led to the search for new religious philosophical ideas with basic changes in the material life of the people. Thus, in the 6th century B.C. there arose as many as 62 religious sects who raised a voice of protest against the Vedic religion. The puritan and the unblemished conduct of the new preachers exercised profound influence upon the people.

The new sects preached livelihood mostly on alms. They believed on strict vegetarian diets and abstained from animal sacrifice. Celibacy and abstinence from holding property made them more acceptable than the greedy priests who cared for nothing but self. The non-possession ideology of both Jainism and Buddhism became instantly popular. The concentration of property and wealth, in few hands created social inequalities, which resulted in the misery and sufferings for many. Both Buddhism and Jainism preferred simple puritanical ascetic living. They were asked to forgo good things of life, not to touch gold and silver and to accept only as much from their patrons as was sufficient to keep their body and soul together. They revolted against material life. Hence, all these became popular.

The *Varnasrama* system of Hinduism partially contributed to the rise of the protestant religious movements during 6th century B.C. The last two stages or *asramas* were *vanaprastha* (moving into the forest) and *sanyasa* (ascetism). The wandering ascetics, freed from the obligations of society and prevailing religious ideas and practices thought anew the fundamental problems of life. Their umber increased during this period and their constant movements brought them into frequent associations with one another. The result was a vigorous re-orientation of life. There was an upheaval of new ideas leading to new philosophical tenets and religious sects. And that is how during the 6th century B.C. many protestant ideologies developed. Some of them had a brief period of existence and gradually faded. A few, however, had come to stay permanently.

The Preachers

The socio-political and religious condition of India during 6th century B.C. led to the search for new religious and philosophical ideas. As a result, as many as 62 religious sects raised voice of protest. All of them were non-Vedic sects (*Avaidikas*). But except Buddhism and Jainism no other sect had any independent literary documents and scriptures. Buddha and Mahavira frequently refer them to in their discourses. And that is how their philosophies have been recorded. The following were the few prominent sects:

Ajita Kesakambalin (The Materialism)

According to the Buddhist and Jaina records he was a non-Brahmin preacher. The people held him in high esteem. He was the earliest exponent of Indian materialism. He was called Kesakambalin because he put on a blanket of human hair over his head. According to him there was no merit in the sacrifice or offering and no resultant fruit from good and evil deeds. None passes from this world to the next. There is no after life. No benefit results from the service rendered to the parents. He was a nihilist in metaphysics and an antinomian in ethics.

A human being is built of four elements. When he dies, the earthy in him relapses to earth, the fluid to water, the heat to fire, the windy to air and his *indriyas* or six senses pass into space (*Akasa*). When a body dies both fools and wise alike are cut off and perish. They do not survive after death. The general attitude of the materialists, according to their critics, was that all religious observances and morality were futile. A man should make most of his life and get what happiness he could out of it. They rejected the virtues of Buddhism and Jainism. Hence, Buddha and Mahavira condemned them for their evil motives.

A man must not turn back from pleasure for fear of concomitant sorrow. He must accept occasional sorrow gladly, for the sake of joy like bones with flesh and corn with husk.

Pakudha Katyayana or Kaccayana (The sect of Anuvadins)

He was a non-Brahmin preacher who was held in great esteem by the people. Buddhaghosa says that Puduka was his personal name and Katyayana was his family name (*gotra*). He accepted seven elementary substances as permanent and eternal, neither created nor caused to be created. The seven elements are – earth, water, fire, air, pleasure, pain and soul. These are neither made nor commanded to be made, neither created nor caused to be created. They are barren (so that nothing can be created out of them), steadfast as a mountain peak, they don't move and firmly fixed as a pillar. There is neither slayer nor causer of slaying. If someone with a sharp sword cuts one's head into two no one thereby deprives anyone of life, a sword has only penetrated into the interval between seven elementary substances.

This *Anuvada* (atom theory) has been described in Tamil sources as *Sarvatavada* (Eternalism). The eternal elements, earth, water etc. unite or separate automatically without any volitional activity. The two elements, pleasure and pain stand for some factors calling forth a union of those elements just like *adrsta* in vaisesika system.

Purana Kassapa – (The sect of Akriyavada)

Purana (Purna) Kassapa (Kasyapa) was a respectable teacher leading a religious body. Most probably he was a Brahmin. The name Purna shows that he was fully enlightened in perfect wisdom. It is said that king Ajatasatru once visited him. According to him if one acts or causes another to act, mutilates or causes another to mutilate, punishes or causes another to punish, causes grief or torment, trembles or causes another to tremble, kills others, creates, takes what is not given, breaks into houses, commits dacoity or robbery or tells lies, is thus acting and there is no guilt. In giving alms, in sacrifices, in offerings, in control of senses, in speaking the truth there is neither merit nor increase in merit. This is called an exposition of no action theory (*Akriyavada*).

According to him the soul was passive (*niskriya*), no action could affect it and it was beyond good or bad. He was an upholder of *Ahetuvada* (no-cause theory).

Sanjaya Belatthiputta (The Sceptics)

Sanjaya, son of Belatthi or Vairati was a contemporary of Buddha. He was reputed for his views, which was skepticism on one hand and a primitive stage of criticism of knowledge on the other like that of the sophists in Greek philosophy. The followers of this sect have been described as Amaravikkhepika, who, when asked a question, would equivocate and wriggle out like an eel. His followers were also often called as Amaravikkrepikas for their philosophical doctrines and Avirudhakas for their moral conduct. He is believed to be identical with Parivrajaka Sanjaya, teacher of

Sariputta and Mogallana. Parivrajaka Suppiya was another follower of Sanjaya.

Mukkhali Gosala (The Ajivika Sect)

The name Mukkhali (Pali) is spelt as Mankhaliputta in Ardhamagadhi and Markali in Tamil. Makkhali Gosala was the third pontiff of Ajivika' sect, the earlier two being Vachha Nanda and Samichchha Kisa who flourished before 6th century B.C. Gosala is said to have been born somewhere near Sravasti and became a homeless wanderer for 24 years out of which six years were spent together with Mahavira at Paniyabhumi. Later Mahavira parted company with him on account of doctrinal differences and went to Sravasti.

The Ajivikas rejected the usual doctrine of *Karma* according to which, man's present condition was determined by his past actions. They believed that the whole thing was being controlled to its minutest detail by an impersonal cosmic principle, *niyati* or destiny. It was impossible to influence the course of transmigration in any way. The sorrows and the joys of life can neither be lessened nor increased. Just as a ball of string when thrown will take its full length, so good or bad alike will take their course.

The Ajivikas adhered to a form of severe asceticism. Gosala exhorted his disciples to abide by strict moral observances. They worshippped the asoka tree, deny the authority of the Vedas, keep their body dirty (for want of daily bathing), give up household life, cover their nakedness with mat clothing and carry in their hand a bunch of peacock feathers. They followed the practice of besmearing their bodies with dust and ashes.

The Ajivikas admitted five kinds of atoms: earth, water, fire, air and life of these only life was endowed with knowledge and others were not. They were beginningless, eternal and indivisible. They can severally assemble together and attain various forms, such as a mountain, a bamboo or a diamond. Only a man of divine vision can perceive single atoms. Pleasure and pain are atomic. The life atom, which is imperceptible, becomes embodied through its own *Karma.* Only an *arhat* can perceive it. When it enters into a body it takes all the qualities of the body as its own.

No literature of the Ajivikas is available. The references to it in the Jaina and Buddhist sources help us to reconstruct its history.

JAINISM

Early Life of Mahavira

Vardhamana was born at Kundagrama, a sub-rub of Vaisali now known as Basukunda (modern Muzafarpur district of Bihar) in the Jnatric (known as Niya in Pali) Kshatriya clan. His father Siddhartha was a wealthy noble; mother Trishala was sister of a Lichchhavi prince Chetaka of Vaisali whose daughter was wedded to Bimbisara of Magadha. Vardhamana was married to his cousin Yasoda and had a daughter Priyadarshana or Anojja who was given in marriage to his nephew Jamali. Different dates have been given by different scholars about his birth and death though all of them agree that he lived for 72 years and died at Pava near Rajagriḥa in the house of the ruler by the name Hastipala (Hatthivala). According to one view he was born in 618 B.C. and died in 540 B.C. As per another view he was born in 540 B.C. and died in 468 B.C., which is generally accepted. According to the Jaina tradition Mahavira's death took place 470 years after the beginning of Vikrama Era i.e. 470+58=528 B.C. Hence, according to this view he was born in 528+72=600 B.C. But this view is generally discarded, as the source is undependable for confusing between kingdoms of Ujjain and Magadha. The famous Jaina writer Hemachandra (12th century A.D.) states that Chandragupta Maurya's accession to the throne took place 155 years after the death of Mahavira. As per this view the year of death comes to 322+155=477 B.C. and that of birth comes to 477+72=549 B.C. In any case he was a senior contemporary of Gautam Buddha.

Attainment of Knowledge

After the death of his parents and with the permission of his elder brother Nandivardhana he left home at the age of 30. For over twelve years Vardhamana wandered from place to place begging his food, meditating, disputing and subjecting his body to extreme austerities. During this period another ascetic, Gosala Mukhaliputta for six years, shared his hardship but ultimately the two quarreled on doctrinal issues and Gosala left Vardhamana to found the new sect of Ajivikas. At first he wore a single garment for thirteen months after which he gave it up and the rest of his life was spent in complete nudity. In the 13th year of his asceticism out of severest penance and deep meditation under a saal tree on the banks of the river Rijupalika not far away from the village Jrimbhikagrama he found full enlightenment and the ultimate state of knowledge (Kaivalya) and became Jina (the conqueror) or Nigrantha (free from bondage) or the Arhant (worthy). Thus, Mahavira (the great hero) propagated Jainism, the religion of the Jinas (the conquerors). He spent the rest 32 years of his life propagating Jainism.

Parsvanath

According to traditional account the doctrines embodied in Jainism were preached by twenty-four Tirthankaras (preparers of the path) or Saints each of whom preached during his own age. With the exception of the last two, Parsvanath and Mahavira the remaining twenty-two are all mythical figures. According to *Abhidharma Chintamani* Rishavadeva was the first Tirthankara followed by Adinatha, Sambhabanath, Abhinandanatha, Sumantinath, Padmaprabha, Suparvanath, Chandraprabha, Suvidhinatha, Vasupuja, Vimalanatha, Anantanatha, Dharmanath, Santinatha, Kunthunatha, Aranatha, Mallinatha, Munisuvrata, Neminatha, Parsvanatha and Mahavira. The life of Parsvanath, who flourished about 250 years before Mahavira, is not known with any element of certainty. He was the son of Asvasena of Varanasi and his wife was Vama. At the age of 30 he abandoned his royal life and became an ascetic and after 84 days of intense penance attained enlightenment. He lived up to 100 years and preached his religion.

Parsvanath taught the fourfold virtue of *Satya* (truthfulness), *Ahimsa* (non-injury), *Aparigraha* (non-possession) and *Asteya* (non-receipt of anything except when it is freely given). Mahavira added one more to these four vows – Brahmacharya (celibacy). Hence unlike Buddha, Mahavira was more a reformer than the founder of a new faith.

Principles of Jainism

Jainism was essentially an atheistic religion where the concept of God was irrelevant. They, however, believed in the Tirthankaras who preached the religion. They did not deny the existence of God but placed them lower than Jina. God, according to them, was 'only the highest, the noblest and the fullest manifestation of the powers which lie latent in the soul of man'. The world was not created, maintained or destroyed by a personal deity but functioned only according to universal law. They believed in the existence of the Soul or *Jiva* in every object, animate as well as inanimate. The *Nava-tattva* of Jainism meant there were nine substances as follows; *Jiva* (conscious soul), *Ajiva* (unconscious soul), *Punya* (merit), *Papa* (demerit), *Asrava* (flow into *jiva*), *Samvara* (stoppage of flow into *jiva*), *Bandha* (bondage), *Nirjara* (destruction of effects of deeds) and *Moksha* (liberation).

Atma

The world consisted of two eternal, uncreated, co-existing but independent categories, such as the conscious (*Jiva*) and the unconscious (*Ajiva*). The conscious being or *Jiva* corresponds to what we call soul (*Atma*). It knows and feels. It acts and is acted upon. It suffers by its contact with matter and is born again and again, only to suffer. Its highest endeavour is to free itself from this bondage which is called nirvana or salvation. This can be attained by higher knowledge and meditation upon the great truth. *Jiva* could inhabit in a plant, an animal or in a human body. *Jiva* is supposed to vary in size and according to the body it lives in. The great purpose of life was purification of the soul, which can be attained by following the Three Jewels of Jainism as Right Faith, Right Knowledge and Right Action.

There is no God or creator. Man's emancipation from suffering does not depend upon the mercy of the creator. Man is the architect of his own destiny. By living an austere life of purity and virtue, he can escape the ills of life. The best life is the life of renunciation. It was the shortest way to salvation. Mahavira generally recommended penance, extinction of desire, disciplined conduct and renunciation.

Karma

The link between *Jiva* and *Ajiva* is *Karma.* Since the *Jiva* existed in physical or material form it got bound to action or *karma.* The *Atma* was subjected to *karma.* It is the *karma,* which decided the future of *Atma.* If man did not do the right *karma* through his mind, speech and body then the unending cycle of rebirth would continue. The *karma* was the eternal law – bad or good karma would be followed by bad or good results. No amount of prayer or worship was to help the *Atma* from rebirth. Man was bound to suffer punishment for the sins committed. Hence, as per Jaina *Triratna* right conduct was the only escape.

The universe functions though interaction of living souls (*Jiva*) and five categories of non-living (*Ajiva*) entities as *Akas* (ether), *Dharma* (Religion), *Adharma, Kala* (time) and *Pudgala* (matter).

Nirvana

Mahavira believed that rigorous ascetic punishment to the body would free the human soul from the painful cycle of birth, death and rebirth. Following the *Three Jewels* of Jainism, Right Faith, Right Knowledge and Right Action one can attain *Moksha* or liberation;. According to Jaina conception, full salvation (Nirvana) was not attainable by lay followers. For attaining the supreme and ultimate state it was necessary that one must abandon all bonds, trammels and worldly things including clothes observing fasting and mortification, ascetic discipline and monastic life. Mahavira himself discarded all clothing though Parsva had permitted the use of three garments. When the soul has finally set itself free it rises above the highest heaven to the top of the universe where it remains in inactive omniscient bliss for eternity. This is Jaina Nirvana.

Non-Violence

Jainism practised non-injury or Ahimsa to a point of absurdity. They would not drink water without straining it for the fear of killing insects and covered their mouth with muslin to save any floating life in the air. Jainism prohibited war and even agriculture as both involved killing of living beings. Eventually the Jainas confined themselves to trade and commerce. Acts of violence and killing, whether intentional or not were to be particularly avoided. The Jain monks usually carried feather dusters to brush ants and insects being trampled on the path.

Schism

Later Jainism was divided into two groups. The strict and orthodox followers of Mahavira under Bhadrabahu who retained the principle of nudity were called *Digambaras* (space-clad). Those who believed in Parsvanath and used white cloth under Sthulabhadra were known as *Svetambaras* (white-clad). It is said that towards the end of Chandragupta Maurya's reign period Magadha was griped by a famine lasting for 12 years. Some Jaina saints under the leadership of Bhadrabahu fled to south India and some others stayed back under the leadership of Stulabhadra. It is believed that Chandragupta Maurya himself joined Bhadrabahu's march to south. Subsequently, there developed difference of opinion among these two groups and the more orthodox group that went to south under Bhadrabahu began to be called as *Digambaras* and the group that stayed back under Stulabhadra became *Swetambaras*. There never were any fundamental doctrinal differences between the two. Later most *Digambar* monks took to wearing robes in public but the division persists down to the present day.

Contribution of Jainism

Mahavira rejected the authority of the Vedas and Vedic rituals including the animal sacrifice. He advocated a very holy, ethical and elevating code of life. The use of common languages Pali and Prakrit in place of Sanskrit and the simple and moral precepts instead of complicated Vedic hymns helped the spread of Jainism.

The incessant efforts of the Jainism made the animal sacrifice unacceptable even among the people who did not embrace Jainism. Non-violence became firmly established as a rule of life.

Jainism made the first serious attempt to mitigate the evils of caste system and ritualistic Vedic religion. Initially the Jainas were not image worshippers but later they began to worship Mahavira and other Tirthankaras. This gave rise to beautiful and imposing images of

Mahavira at different places. The colossal monolithic statue of Mahabali at Sravanbelgola (120 feet high) is a marvel in itself.

Jainism was much less hostile and more accommodative towards Hinduism than other religions. The fundamental logic of Jainism was no absolute affirmation of denial. When all knowledge is only probable and relative the opponent's view was as much likely to be true as that of mine. This spirit of accommodation has kept Jainism alive till today.

It did not condemn the caste system as Buddhism did. It however believed in equality. According to Mahavira a person was born in a lower caste due to his virtue or sin in the previous birth. In his opinion people of lower caste must practise pure and meritious life to attain liberation.

Jainism believed in freedom from worldly bonds. Knowledge according to Jainas was not to be pursued for its own sake but for the sake of liberation. They believed – do not live to know but know to live.

The principles of Jainism is said to have influenced the religious ethics of Mahatma Gandhi. As much he was born in a Bania family of Gujrat among whom, Jainism continues to be popular.

Spread of Jainism

Mahavira spent the rest of his life preaching his doctrine to all kinds of men. He moved from place to place for eight months a year and spent the rainy season (four months) in some town of eastern India. The Jaina tradition gives the names of such places as Champa, Vaisali, Rajagriha, Mithila and Sravasti. The wonderings of Mahavira give us a fair idea of the spread of the religion. This included the kingdoms of Kosala, Videha, Magadha and Anga.

Jainism was bestowed with royal patronage from time to time. Rulers of important royal families of Magadha and Kosala were converted into Jainism. He paid frequent visits to Magadha as its rulers; Srenika, Bimbisara and Ajatasatru honoured him highly. It is believed that Çhandragupta Maurya became a Jaina, gave up his throne and spent last years of his life as a Jaina ascetic at Sravanabelgola in Mysore. Under the royal patronage of Kharavela, Jainism became the state religion of Kalinga as recorded in the Hatigumpha Inscription. It succeeded in establishing itself firmly and in some places became very influential but it never spread beyond India. Mathura in the north and Sravanbelgola in the south formed important centres of Jaina activities. During later period, the south Indian dynasties like Kadambas, Chalukyas and Rastrakutas accorded their patronage to Jainism.

Mahavira left behind him a strongly organised religious order, which gradually spread over the country. A band of Jaina monks under Bhadrabahu migrated to south and spread the religion in entire Deccan with Sravanbelgola as the centre. Jainism was popular in and around Mathura. The Junagarh inscription of the grandson of Jayadamana (Damaysada or Rudradaman I) of 2nd century A.D. refers to adoption of Jainism. Jainism did not spread in India as widely as Buddhism. It also did not spread like Buddhism in countries beyond India. But it is noteworthy that when Buddhism has almost perished in the land of its birth, Jainism still survived with millions of followers over thousands of years.

Jaina Literature

The Jaina religious literature was written in Prakrit called Ardhamagadhi. According to tradition, the original doctrines taught by Mahavira were contained in fourteen old texts called *Parvas*. Towards the close of fourth century B.C. Sthulabhadra convened the First Council of Elders at Pataliputra and reconstructed the Jaina canons in 12 *Angas* (limbs) or sections superseding the 14 *Parvas*. This is considered as the canon of the *Svetambaras*. The original canon of undivided Jainism is not available as the same was delivered mostly orally. In fifth century A.D. in Council of Elders at Valabhi the canons of the *Svetambaras* were again reconstructed which created a number of *Upangas*. The *Digambaras* devised their own canon.

The most comprehensive work on Jaina philosophy is Umasvati's *Tattvarthadhigama-Sutra*. Bhadrabahu, the sixth *Thera* after Mahavira and a contemporary of Chandragupta Maurya is said to have died 170 years after Mahavira's *nirvana*. His work Jaina *Kalpasutra*, which is almost the history of Jainism, contains three different sections, all sections supposedly written by him. Section I contains the Jaina *Charita* or the biographies of the Jainas. In it we get the names of the twenty-three Tirthankars who preceded Mahavira. This section also deals in great detail the biography of Mahavira. The section II contains a long list of Jaina *ganas* and their chiefs (*ganadharas*). The list goes far beyond Bhadrabahu for which it is often doubted, if he has written the section? However, later additions can't be discounted. Section III contains the *samachari* or the rules for the ascetics and the list of the pontiffs upto Bhadrabahu.

The sacred Jaina canonical literature may be grouped as follows:

1. Twelve Angas
2. Twelve Upangas
3. Ten Prakiranas
4. Six Chhedasutras
5. Four Mulasutras
6. Miscellaneous Texts

Besides this, the Jainas had a long list of non-canonical literature in the form of *kavyas*, lyrics etc. They possessed an extensive poetic literature called *charitas* and *prabandhas*. Hemachandra, a famous Jaina writer was a veritable genius, who wrote in the fields of grammar, lexicography, philosophy etc. His monumental work *Trishashtisalka – purusha – charita* (lives of 63 men) is regarded as an epic. His other important works are *Parisishta-parvan* or *Sthaviravali-charita*, a biographical work of earlier teachers of Jainism. There were other semi-historical works like *Prabandha-Chintamani* by Merutunga and *Prabandha-Kosa* by Rajasekhar.

Jaina Art and Architecture

Although the Jainas denied the existence of God and idol worship gradually they began to worship the images of the Tirthankaras. The earliest Jaina image unearthed from Lohanipur in Patna belongs to the Maurya or early Sunga period. The Hatigumpha inscription of Kharavela refers to the removal of a Jaina image from Magadha to Kalinga. Several Jaina images and *Ayagapatas* (votive tablets) with Jaina figures and *Ashtamangala* (eight auspicious marks) have been discovered from Mathura. The followers of Jainism have created monuments of great merit. The Jaina cave temples at Udayagiri and Ellora and the Dilwara temples at Mount Abu are excellent specimens of Jaina architecture and sculpture. The colossal monolithic statue of Mahabali at Shravanbelgola (120 feet high) is a marvel by itself. The Jaina *Ashtamangala* or eight auspicious signs such as a Swastik, a mirror, an urn, a cane seat shaped like an hour glass, two fishes (*yugma mina*), a flower garland and a manuscript sometimes have been carved on the pedestal or other places. The images of *Jina* are characterized by their long hanging arms (in case of standing figures) and the *Sribatsa* symbol, which were called as *Kayotsarga.*

The Jaina images also included a long list of Hindu divinities as Sri-Lakshmi, Ganesha, Kubera, Navagraha, Dikapalas, Sutras, Matrikas etc. They worshipped Goddess Saraswati in sixteen different forms and names (as Srutadevi, Vidyadevi, Rohini, Prajnapati etc) but with the same head. A large number of various types of Saraswati images are found in different Jaina temples (Dilwara to Khajuraho) belonging to Digambar as well as Swetambara sects. As a matter of fact a special festival is held in honour of Goddess Saraswati known as Jnana-Panchami or Sruta Panchami.

BUDDHISM

Among all the protestant religions Buddhism had greatest popularity and acceptance. Unlike the Jainas, the Buddhists did not claim any earlier antiquity for their religion beyond the life of Buddha. It had a more popular social base than any other contemporary religion. He successfully delivered to the world his message of compassion, love, self-restraint and self-culture.

Early Life

Gautam, alias Siddhartha was the son of Suddhodhana, the Chief of the Sakya clan of Kapilavastu, which is presently in the Tarai region of Nepal. The place of his birth was a grove of Saal trees called Lumbini Gama (or Lumbini Vana) near Kapilavastu. The famous Rummindei Pillar with an inscription has been erected there by Asoka to mark its importance. His, mother Mahamaya, a Koliyan princess, was the Chief queen of Suddhodhana, who died seven days after his birth. His mother's sister and Step-mother Mahaprajapati Gautami brought him up.

The date of the birth of Gautam is not known for certain. According to one theory he was born in 586 B.C. and died in 506 B.C. after living a life of 80 years. In another source it is stated that the coronation of Asoka took place 218 years after the death of Buddha, which makes (269 B.C. + 218 years) 487 B.C. as the year of his death and 567 B.C.(487 + 80) as the year of his birth. As a young prince he received normal training befitting of a *Kshatriya*. At the age of sixteen he was married to his cousin Yasodhara also named as Bhaddakachchana, Subhadraka, Gopa or Bimba, daughter of Sakyan, Suppabuddha and had a son, Rahul. Gautam himself named his son as Rahul, meaning an impediment or hindrance. Inspite of all prosperity and success and the efforts of his father he was not inwardly happy. The idea of renunciation, came to his mind from seeing four persons in four different stages – an old man bent with age, a sick man shivering with fever and a corpse being carried to the cremation ground followed by weeping relations, and finally, a wandering monk, peaceful and calm with inward joy. On seeing him Siddhartha realized where his destiny lay and set his heart on becoming a wanderer. The burden and misery of the mundane world cast a deep spell on his reflective mind. He felt dissatisfied with life and at the age of 29 on a *Baishakha Purnima* night when all were busy in festivities celebrating the birth of his son, he rode off with his charioteer Channa on his favorite horse Kanthaka up to the end of the city, where he doffed off his princely robes, renounced everything and became an ascetic. This journey "from a home to a homeless life" is famous as the "Great Renunciation", *Mahabhiniskramana.*

Attainment of Knowledge

For six years he traversed a number of places as an ascetic in search of true knowledge. During this period he met Arada Kalama on the outskirts of Vaisali and became his disciple. There he learnt about the seventh stage of meditation (*akinchanyayatana* or sphere of desirelessness – nothingness) as a part of the Sankhya school of philosophy. Rightly though, he was not satisfied and became a disciple of another teacher, Rudraka Ramaputra in the outskirts of Rajagriha. Here he reached the stage of highest meditation but could not reach the final liberation. There upon he took up deep meditation subjecting his body to extreme physical pain along with five other Brahmin ascetics. One night when he was on the verge of death due to exertion and starvation he decided to take food just enough to keep his body active. On account of this, his five Brahmin companions deserted him.

At last at Uruvela near Gaya under a pipal tree on the banks of river Niranjana (modern Phalgu) he sat on deep meditation after accepting milk from a milkmaid named Sujata with a vow either to perish or to attain the knowledge. There he finally attained the knowledge from the "Great Unknown" and became Buddha (the enlightened one) or *Tathagata* (the one who attained truth) at the age of 35. The tree has been named as Bodhi tree (tree of wisdom) and the place as Bodh Gaya. At first he thought of his two teachers Arada Kalama and Rudraka Ramaputra but they were no more. Hence, he proceeded to Saranath to preach to the five Brahmin companions who had deserted him earlier.

Buddha preached his first sermon in a Deer Park at Saranath near Varanasi before his first five Brahmin disciples and the event has been described as the "Turning of the Wheel of Law" or *Dharma Chakra Pravartana.* Some of his earliest converts were Sariputta and Mogallana who received the truth from Assaji, one of the five original disciples. The remaining forty-five years of his life were spent wandering on foot to preach the truth as he had realized it. He visited many places including Kapilavastu where his father, wife, son and many others including his belligerent cousin Devadatta were converted into Buddhism. At the request of his mother he allowed, with much reluctance the community of women in Buddhism. He died at the age of 80 at Kushinagar (modern Kasia in Gorakhpur district) in 487 B.C. (*Mahaparinirvana*).

As Buddha moved, the rulers and the ruled alike felt attracted towards his teachings. A new wave of religious thinking soon swept the country. In the days when his reputation stood at its highest point and before whom kings bowed themselves he himself was seen with a begging bowl in his hands, begging for alms from house to house without uttering a single word of request and waiting until a morsel of food was thrown in to his bowl.

Teachings

The fundamentals of Buddha's teachings as contained in the *Dhammachakkapavatan Sutta* were the "**Four Noble Truth**" (*Arya Satya*) and "**Noble Eight-Fold Path**" (*Astangika marga*). The first of the Four Noble Truth was *Dukha* or Sorrow. Life was full of sorrows and sufferings. The second Noble Truth was the cause of the sorrows. Desire or *Kamana* was the cause of the sorrows. The thirst for worldly objects was the origin of the suffering. This was known as the Law of causation. The third Truth was *Dukha nirodha* or to end the sorrows by putting an end to the desire. Elimination of desire was to lead to the end of sorrows. The fourth Truth was the *Arya Astangika marga* or the Noble Eight Fold Path to be taken up for the elimination of the desire and to achieve eternal salvation or Nirvana.

The Four Noble Truths were beyond the realization of a common man. These were *Ariyasacca* (*Aryasatya*) meant only for those who had advanced spirituality. The Eight-Fold Path (*Astangika marga*) contained eight principles as, right vision, right aims, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right meditation. It was, thus, a code of conduct for everyman. It became the basis of Buddhism as a religion. The exposition of the Eight Fold Path forms the theme of the *Dharma-Chakra-Pravartana Sutra*, which is said to be the first discourse of Buddha. The Eight Fold Path lies between two extremes namely gross sensualism or vile pleasure seeking on one hand and extreme asceticism or severest self-mortification on the other hand. Hence the Eight-Fold Path of Buddha was called the **Middle Path** (*Madhayama Pratipat*) as it keeps clear of the two extreme ways of life. This is also called as **Right Path**.

Buddha prescribed **Five Fundamental Precepts** or moral code. These were to refrain from killing, stealing, adultery, indulging in falsehood and drunkenness. He also recommended for the monks as well as for the laity the observance of **Six Fundamental Virtues**, as charity, purity, patience, courage, contemplation and knowledge. Buddha discouraged speculation on the Gods or the origin and end of the universe. He did not recognize the authority of the Vedas and rejected its infallibility.

Karma and Nirvana

The philosophy of Buddhism was intensely rationalistic. It believed in the law of *karma* and rebirth. The present is determined by the past. A man reaps the consequences of his own actions in the previous birth. Birth is the cause of human suffering and it is within the power of man to get rid of rebirth. The ultimate aim of Buddhism was the attainment of *Nirvana* or the extinction of the desire for rebirth.

Buddha concluded that one must rise above the changing state (*anitya*) to an everlasting state of peace (*nitya, nirvana*). He dealt more with the practices leading to *Nirvana* than with the exposition of *Nirvana* or with the theory of *karma*. One who overcomes the impediments or carving for material and immaterial pleasures of the world, pride, self-righteousness and ignorance he becomes an *arhat* (worthy) and attains *Nirvana*. He will not come to the world of men but will be reborn among the Gods to attain *Nirvana*.

Non-Violence

Buddha was the prophet of non-violence. Though compared to Jainism Buddhism was moderate in its stress on the doctrine of ahimsa or non-violence. The Buddhists, like the Jainas rejected animal sacrifice in any form.

Contribution

Buddhism at once appealed to the masses as a welcome relief from the priest-ridden and caste-ridden Brahmanism. Buddha was a practical reformer who took note of the realities of the day. Instead of involving himself with philosophical controversies regarding *Atma* and *Brahma* he addressed himself to the worldly problems. Since, early Buddhism was not enmeshed up in the claptrap of philosophical idealism it appealed to the common people.

Buddhism particularly won support of the lower order for attacking caste system. It challenged the caste system, as a priestly supremacy. Caste distinction was not necessary for spiritual attainment. People, high and low could be admitted into Buddhism. This can be taken as a kind of revolution in Indian history. By abolishing caste system Buddha raised the status of the lower order and revolutionized the system.

Buddhism had special appeal for the people of non-Vedic areas. Magadha being outside the pale of *Aryavarta* responded readily to the Buddhism as they were looked down upon by the orthodox Brahmins of Uttar Pradesh. So also was the case with Deccan.

The magnetic personality of Buddha worked as a touchstone for all who came in contact with him, high and low alike. The impeccable logic with which Buddha met the arguments of the learned orthodox Brahmins convinced the priests, the princes, the rich and the poor alike. The **Three Jewels** of Buddhism, **Buddha, Dhamma** and **Samgha** added to its popularity. Buddhism was based on love and humanity. The puritan and unblemished character of the monks became a source of attraction by itself.

By freeing religion from costly and elaborate rituals he made it accessible to the poor and downtrodden. The demand of the time was cure from the evils of Brahmanism and that is what Buddha systematically provided.

The use of Pali and Magadhi, the language of the people, also contributed to the spread of Buddhism. It used the language and the dialect of the people among whom it was being preached. He did not use the generally unintelligible Sanskrit, the study of which had almost become the monopoly of the Brahmins.

Buddhism permitted women into its fold and granted them equal status in the *Samgha.* This made a significant impact on the Brahmanical society where women and the *Shudras* were placed in the same category and were neither given the sacred thread nor permitted to read the Vedas. Their entry into Buddhism freed them from social complexes of inferiority.

The emphasis on non-violence became instantly popular, as it had come at a time when non-Aryans slaughtered animals for food and Aryans for religion in large scale.

The Buddhist monks did not own any personal property and did not accept gold and silver. This marked a reaction against new elements of material life and the greed of the Brahmins.

Buddhism offered salvation to the people who found it difficult to adjust themselves to new social mores and elements of material life. The ordinary people were attracted towards Buddhism in large number as it drew a perfect balance in the social developments generated by the material conditions created by the use of iron, plough agriculture and coins.

Besides discarding caste system Buddha preached social equality of rich and poor, high and low. In his first *sermon* at Saranath he spoke, "to kings and beggar alike, the world is evil; there is but one road to freedom, and that must be trodden alike by all. In that road none is before or after others."

Spread of Buddhism

Buddhism had a rapid rise. Buddha had the satisfaction to see, before he passed away (*mahaparinivana*) that people and princes of such powerful kingdoms as Magadha, Kosala and Kosambi and the republican states like the Sakyas, the Vajjis and the Mallas accepted Buddhism and that the whole of middle India or *Majjhimadesa* was dotted with Buddhist Monasteries and *Viharas*. After his death a highly organised Buddhist *Samgha* under the selfless monks made reasonable progress.

Two hundred years after the death of Buddha, the famous Mauryan king Asoka embraced Buddhism. This was an epoch making event. If Buddhism converted Chandasoka to Dharmasoka and then to Asoka, the Great Asoka also was the chief architect in making Buddhism a world religion. Alongwith popularizing Buddhism throughout India, Asoka sent his missionaries to central Asia, west Asia and Sri Lanka. And that is how Buddha has been described as the 'Light of Asia'. Even today Sri Lanka, Myanmar, China and Japan profess Buddhism when it has almost became non-existent in the land of its birth. Asoka popularized the Buddhist holy places – the Lumbini Grove at Kabilavastu, where Buddha was born, the Bodhi tree at Gaya where he attained knowledge, the Deer Park at Varanasi where he preached his first sermon and the Kusinagara where he died (*mahaparinivana*) which, were visited by many including Asoka himself. Whatever was the position of Buddhism during the lifetime of Buddha, 200 years later it was a distinct religion. The Sri Lankan works, *Dipavamsa, Mahavamsa* and *Culavamsa* give valuable information and the progress of Buddhism in the Island, and the Chinese pilgrims Fa-Hien, Hiuen-Tsang etc. give the picture of the progress of Buddhism in China and South East Asia.

After the death of Buddha, four Buddhist Councils were held to compile the religious doctrine (*Dhamma*) and monastic order (*Vinanya*) from time to time. The First Council was held soon after the death of Buddha in 487 B.C. at Rajagriha under the auspices of king Ajatasatru. Here Upali one of the chief disciples read out *Vinaya Pitaka*, as heard from Buddha himself. Ananda recited *Sutta Pitaka* the great collection of Buddha's sermons. The Second Council was held at Vaisali in 387 B.C. under the auspices of king Kalasoka. The schism raised its head here. Those who went with the traditional *Vinaya Pitaka* were called *Sthvarivadins* (Pali Theravad) and the pro-changers were called *Mahasanghikas*. The Third Council was held at Pataliputra in 251 B.C. under the patronage of Asoka. This was presided over by the learned monk Mogalliputta

Tissa. It was here that the third *Pitaka*, the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* was added making the Buddhist canonical literature as *Tripitaka* (three baskets) – *Vinaya* (conduct) *Pitaka*, *Sutta* (sermon) *Pitaka* and *Abhidharma* (metaphysics) *Pitaka*. The Fourth Council was held at Kundalavana Vihar in Kashmir under the leadership of Vasumitra and Asvaghosa during the reign of Kanishka. It was here that Buddhism was formally divided into two, *Hinayana* (lesser vehicle) and *Mahayana* (greater vehicle).

The Hinayanas followed principles of Buddhism in its original form whereas Mahayanas started to worship the images of Buddha in Bodhisattvas form as Avalokiteswar (looking down) and Padmapani (Lotus bearer). The new converts of Buddhism like the upper caste Hindus and the foreigners found *Mahayana* form as being more convenient. It fitted to the needs of many and the mood of the time. The *Hinayana* gradually began to decline and as reported by Hiuen Tsang in 7th CAD the *Hinayana* had almost become extinct in India though it was widely popular in Sri Lanka and other foreign countries. Among the exponents of *Mahayana* philosophy were Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, Asanga, Dinnaga and Dharmakirti.

Buddhist Samgha

The phenomenal success of Buddhism was due to the organization of the *Samgha* or the Buddhist Church. The Buddhists pay reverence in their daily prayer to the **Holy Trinity** (Three Jewels), I seek refuge in **Buddha**, I seek refuge in **Dhamma** and I seek refuge in **Samgha**. The membership of *samgha* was open to all men and women above 15 years of age irrespective of caste. In a *samgha* they were to pronounce the **'Three jewels'** and follow the **'Ten precepts'**. The 'Ten precepts' were: abstention from (i) killing, (ii) stealing, (iii) adultery, (iv) speaking falsehood, (v) drinking intoxicating liquor, (vii) witnessing dance and music (viii) use of garlands, unguents etc. (ix) use of high and broad beds and (x) acceptance of gold or silver. A monk was to beg for his food. This practice was discarded later. A monk was authorized to own only eight requisites – three ropes, a waistcloth, an alms bowl, a razor, a needle and a cloth to strain his drinking water.

The monastic order did not last long. There was no central organization to regulate the numerous monasteries and enforce uniformity. There was no organization to clear their doubts and to settle disputes. The chief monk was not nominated but held office by the suffrage of all the monks. The nuns formed a distinct community with special code of rules and were generally treated as inferiors.

The monastic institutions were the most remarkable contribution of Buddhism to Indian culture. In due course they developed into academic centres for providing the right type of men well versed in religion and philosophy.

Buddhist Literature

Though the Buddhist sacred literature was written in Pali. Magadhi and other dialects only the Pali version has survived in its entirety.

The Pali cannon consists of Three *Pitakas* (baskets) and is therefore known as **Tripitaka** (three baskets). These are *Vinaya* (conduct) *Pitaka*, *Sutta* (sermon) *Pitaka* and *Abhidhamma* (metaphysics) *Pitaka. Vinaya Pitaka* has been placed at the head of the cannons. It deals with monastic discipline and comprises of *Patimokkha, Sutta Vibhanga, Kandhakas* and *Parivara.* Originally it contained 152 rules, which were later extended to 227. The *Sutta Pitaka* incorporates great literary works of Buddhism in prose and verse. It comprises of five collections called *Nikayas – Digha Nikaya, Majjhima Nikaya, Samyutta Nikaya, Anguttara Nikaya* and *Khuddaka Nikaya.* These are either sermons of Buddha preceded by a short introduction or dialogue in prose. The *Jatakas*, more than 500 in number formed a part of the *Sutta Pitaka* and were the most popular medium of Buddhist propaganda. They contained fables, fairy tales, romances, adventures and narratives in which the central figure was always the Bodhisattva. As the name '*Jataka*' suggests they were mostly associated with the birth of Gautam. Besides providing valuable material on social and economic condition they give details about common man. The *Abhidhamma Pitaka* (basket of transcendental doctrine) deals with the same subjects as *Sutta Pitaka* but in a more scholastic way. It is written in the form of questions and answers with an appeal to dogmatism. It consists of seven books of which *Kathavathu* or the *Vijnanapada*, attributed to Mogaliputta Tissa is the most important.

Non-Canonical Literature

A vast non-canonical literature developed mostly as commentaries to explain the canonical texts to the Buddhist monks outside India. The great bulk of non-canonical literature is the product of the Sri Lankan monks. Some of the Indian non-canonical works are *the Milinda-panha*, the *Nettipakarana* and the *Petakopadesa.*

Milinda-panha is the work of a conversation between the Greek king Milinda (Menander) of Sagala and the Buddhist monk Nagasena on a number of problems and disputed points of Buddhism. The literary and dialectical skills are of very high order. Mahakachehana wrote the Nettipakarana and Petakapadesa. *Nettipakarana* (book of guidance) is one of the earliest works, which gives the teachings of Buddha in a systematic way. *Petakapadesa* explains some obscure points unanswered elsewhere.

The *Dipavamsa* (the Island Chronicle), The *Mahavamsa* (the Great Chronicle) and *Culavamsa* (the Lesser Chronicle) are important non-canonical works of Sri Lanka written in Pali. The author of *Dipavamsa* is not known. *Mahavamsa* is the work of Mahanama who flourished in the last quarter of 5th century A.D. The literature of the Theravada sect was in Pali language. The greatest commentator of Pali canon was Buddhaghosa who lived in Sri Lanka during the reign period of Mahanama. He wrote *Visuddhi-magga*, the first systematic treatise on the Buddhist doctrines. He also wrote commentaries on *Tripitaka*.

Some of the Buddhist works were also written in Sanskrit, which generally belonged to Mahayana texts. Asvaghosa, a contemporary of Kanishka, wrote *Buddhacharita* and *Saundrananda* in epic style, which can be ranked along with the works of Valmiki and Kalidasa. *Buddhacharita* gives the traditional account of the life of Buddha in a vivid form. His other works were *Vajrasuchi* and *Sariputraprakarana*. The celebrated Buddhist author Nagarjuna wrote among others the *Madhyamika sutra* and a commentary on *Prajnaparamitasastra*. The *Madhyamika sutra* advocates the middle or relative reality of things, neither non-existent nor totally existent. Aryadeva, a disciple of Nagarjuna wrote *Chatussataka.* Asanga wrote *Sutralankara.* His younger brother Vasubandhu wrote *Abhidharmakosha.* Dinnaga wrote the famous treatise on logic, the *Pramana-Samuchchaya.* Chandragomin who flourished in the seventh century A.D. was a grammarian, a philosopher and a poet. Santideva another great scholar produced *Sikshasamuchchaya, Bodhicharyavatara* and *Sutrasamuchchaya.*

Buddhist Art and Architecture

Buddhism has left its marks in the field of art and architecture of India. The first human statues worshipped in India were probably those of Buddha. The Greek and the Indian sculptors worked together to create a new kind of art, which is known as the Gandhara School of Art. The early Buddhist monuments of Sanchi, Bharhut, Bodh Gaya, Amaravati and other places are illuminating examples of artistic activity. For the residence of the monks rooms were hewn out of the rocks and thus, began the cave architecture at Barabar hills in Gaya and at Nasik.

The Buddhist art reached its highest watermark during the Gupta period in the paintings at Ajanta (caves I, II, XVI and XIX) and at Bagh near Gwalior (in Madhya Pradesh). Most of these paintings depict scenes of the *Jataka* stories but there are secular paintings as well. The painting of Great Bodhisattva in cave I at Ajanta is one of the finest pieces of painting.

Buddha figures in general can be classified under three main categories such as *sthanaka* (standing), *asana* (seated) and *sayana* (recumbent). Each of these, when shown as a part of the composite relief, specially the standing and sitting figures, with the hands shown in particular poses (*mudra*) was intended to illustrate different incidents of the life of Buddha. The recumbent form is utilised to represent the *Mahaparinirvana* of Buddha at Kusinagar. The *mudras* or the hand poses of Buddha images convey a particular meaning as for example *abhaya* (protection), *dhyana* (meditation), *bhusparsa* (touching the earth) and the *Dharmachakra mudra*. In addition to the Buddha images we come across a number of Bodhisattva images, meaning images of Gautam or Siddhartha before the attainment of knowledge such as the picture of the Great Renunciation, Gautam dressed as a monk, the royal figure with jewels and headdress holding a lotus flower or nectar flask etc. The most popular and widely carved Bodhisattvas were the images of Avalokiteswar (looking down), Padmapani (holding a lotus in hand), Manjusri (naked sword in one hand to destroy falsehood and a book in another hand to explain the ten *paramitas*), Vajrapani (a thunder bolt in hand like God Indra), Maitreya (gentle), Ksitigarkha (guardian of the purgatories) etc. Similarly in Buddha form we come across images like Amitabh (immeasurable glory), Amitayus (immeasurable age) and Tathagata (one who has attained the goal).

Two of the masterpieces of sculpture belonging to Gupta period are the standing Buddha of Mathura (217 C.M. in height) and the seated Buddha of Saranath. The standing Buddha entirely carved in the monastic garment invokes feelings of adoration and deep reverence. The seated Buddha in his *Dharmachakra mudra* is seated in the *Padmasana*. Speaking about the image Rene Grossest aptly writes, "........ the limbs are pure and harmonious, the face has a tranquil suavity, and it is inspired by an art so steeped in intellectualism as to be a direct expression of the soul through the purely beauty of form". The recumbent form refers to *Mahaparinirvana* at Kusinagara.

Jainism and Buddhism Compared

Similarities

Jainism and Buddhism have much in common between them. Both were essentially moral codes rather than metaphysical or religious systems. Their main exponents Mahavira and Gautam came from *Kshatriya* families and were contemporaries. Their life stories reveal striking similarities. Both the religions owe their origin to the reaction against the existing religious practices, both stressed non-violence and showed deliberate indifference to the authority of the Vedas and the existence of Gods. Both the religions denied the efficacy of rituals.

They both started from the same fundamental principle that the world is full of misery, and the object of religion is to find means of deliverance from the endless cycle of births and deaths, which bring men again and again into this world. The *karma* or the individual's action is the root cause of rebirth, emphasis is laid upon conduct and the practice of austerities in varying degrees of severity as the chief means of salvation rather than religious rituals and sacrifices. Both believed that salvation is attainable only by homeless ascetics though both regarded the life of the layman as an initial preparatory stage in the process.

Jainism and Buddhism both imply a system of philosophy and social organization with a code of morality and possessed a common background of Aryan culture.

Both of them owed their origin to the kindred forces, whether intellectual, spiritual or social and may be viewed either as a revolt against the Brahmanical religion or as an outcome and modification of it by overstressing the ascetic side such as renunciation of the world, self-denial and *Ahimsa.*

Both Mahavira and Buddha preached in the common language of the people not in the generally unintelligible, Sanṣkrit. Both denounced caste system and pleaded social equality alongwith equality of men and women.

The resemblance was so great that many scholars considered Jainism to be merely a branch of Buddhism. Both of them were products of the same prevailing spirit of the time and no wonder that both traveled in the same way upto a certain distance in their search for truth. The two teachers lived and preached their religions in the same region and recruited their disciples from the same sections of people.

Dissimilarities

If there were resemblances between the two in many respects, there also were differences. The Jainas extolled the virtues of penance and self-mortification whereas the Buddhists on the other hand favoured the middle path, avoiding extremities of penance. The Jainas carried their theory of non-injury and non-violence to extreme limits so as to strain the water before drinking to avoid killing of insects. The Buddhists did not go to that extent. Similarly the Buddhist attitude towards caste was one of more pronounced opposition than that of the Jainas who stood for equality rather than complete condemnation of caste system. The *Nirvana* of the Buddhists differed fundamentally from that of the Jainas. The *Nirvana* for the Buddhists was escape from rebirth where as for the Jainas it meant escape from the body. The Buddhists did not favour the extreme form of asceticism and practices like going naked. The Buddhist followed the golden mean in all matters.

Buddha showed the way to self-restraint and right action not the self-mortification and inactivity of Mahavira.

There was, however, a great deal of rivalry between the two sects. The two preachers condemned each other in no uncertain terms.

The two religions had equal footing in the country for quite sometime. But in their later developments differences occurred. Buddhism became a world religion whereas Jainism could not spread beyond the boundaries of India. On the other hand while Buddhism practically vanished from India Jainism is still a living force with a large following.

Chapter - 4

THE MAURYAS

CHANDRAGUPTA MAURYA (322/23 B.C. TO 300 B.C.)

The Mauryan period constitutes a distinctive landmark in the history and culture of India. The period was not only marked by the blossoming of art and culture, growth of economy and increased contacts with other countries but also was very significant as the first unified empire of India. The Mauryan Empire was the first unified empire of India because it included greater part of the Indian subcontinent and its adjacent regions. Hence in the fitness of things, not as an accident the lion capital of the Sarnath Pillar with Asokan Inscriptions belonging to over two thousand years has become the national emblem of the Republic of India. The Mauryan Empire witnessed important changes in polity, society and economy of India.

With the coming of the Mauryas at the end of the fourth century B.C. the political picture of India becomes simplified. The Mauryan Empire controlled a large area under a single power. The political system acquired greater uniformity. Uniformity and efficiency were the main features of Mauryan administration. On the eve of Alexander's departure from India it was expected that India would be Hellenized. The new ruler Sandrocottus

(Chandragupta) not only made India a great power but avenged the defeat of Hydaspes by defeating Seleucus Nikator in 305 B.C. Chandragupta Maurya liberated the northwest from the yoke of the Greek rule and freed the people of Magadha from the unpopular rule of the Nandas.

SOURCES

"The advent of Maurya dynasty marks the passage form darkness to light for the historians. Chronology suddenly becomes definite, almost precise" says V.A. Smith.

The **Greek writers** began to take interest on Indian history after Alexander's invasion. The Greek writers like Nearchus, Onesicritus and Aristobulus who accompanied Alexander in his Indian campaigns have left valuable accounts of Indian history. Nearchus was deputed by Alexander to explore the coast between the Indus and Persian Gulf. Onesicritus was the pilot of Nearchus who later wrote a book about the voyage and India. Aristobulus was entrusted with certain commissions in India. The Greek Ambassador, Meghasthenes came to the court of Chandragupta Maurya. His Indica has been considered as the first history book on Indian history with all the elements of history. Another Greek Ambassador, Deimachus came during the reign of Bindusara.

Other classical Roman and Greek writers like Pliny, Diodurous, Strabo, Arrian, Plutarch and Justin have also left valuable information on India. As a matter of fact the Indica of Meghasthenes in its original form is not available. It comes to us in a fragmented manner as quoted by these authors. Some of these have been collected by Schwanbeck and translated into English by Mc Crindle.

Arthasastra, generally attributed to Kautilya or Chanakya, Chandragupta Maurya's mentor and minister serves as the beaconlight for the study on Mauryan polity. In a way Arthasastra reflects conditions other than those described by Meghasthenes. As for example, Meghasthenes speaks of six boards, each board consisting of five members for the administration of the city of Pataliputra whereas Kautilya gives no such information. Hence taken together these two give the complete history.

Information is also available here and there in a scattered way in the **Puranas**, **Buddhist texts** like Mahavamsa, Dipavamsa, and Jainaworks like Parisisthaparvana, Patanjali's Mahabhashya and Vishakhadatta's Mudrarakshyasa. These are important ancient literary works with information on the Mauryan rule.

Epigraphy ranks first among the Indian sources on Mauryan Empire. The Asokan edicts found in different parts of India and outside are the oldest and most precisely dated epigraphic records of India. It is interesting to note that the Asokan Inscriptions don't contain any reference on his grandfather Chandragupta. However the find spots of the inscriptions provide information on the extent of his territory. The Junagarh Inscription of Rudradamana refers to Chandragupta as the first Maurya and describes his conquests and administration elaborately.

ANCESTRY

Chandragupta Maurya did not inherit a throne. He was born in humble circumstances. Like many other great figures of history the early career of Chandragupta is shrouded in obscurity. The Greek writer Justin describes Chandragupta as being of low origin. According to the Jaina work Parisisthaparvana of Hemachandra, Chandragupta was the grandson of the chief of a village of Mayuraposaka (Peacock rearers). The Asokan pillar at Lauriya Nandangarh and sculptures of Sanchi Stupa bear figures of a number of peacocks. Hence, it is believed that the word Maurya has been derived from the word *Mayura*.

The Puranas project him as being base born. According to the Puranas, Sudras ruled over Magadha after the fall of the Nandas. The Vishnu Purana was the first to suggest the low origin of Chandragupta by explaining his title Maurya as being derived from Mura, supposed to be the mother of Chandragupta who was a concubine of the last Nanda king. According to this view the word Maurya is derived form Mura. But the derivation seems to be grammatically wrong. The word Maurya can't be derived from feminine Mura but only from masculine Mura, which was the name of a Gotra. Mura, a Sudra woman was probably a mistress of the last Nanda king, Dhanananda.

The Mudrarakshyasa, which is of a much later date, describes Chandragupta as "*Vrshala*" and "*Kulahina*". Many have interpreted this to project him as a Sudra and as an outcaste. Nilakantha Sastri describes him as the son of a *Vrishala* or concubine of the last Nanda king. Some others on the contrary interpret *'Vrshal'* as *'Vrisha'* or chief among kings and *Kulahina* as of humble birth.

The Buddhist sources however give an altogether different picture. The Mahavamsa describes the Mauryas as belonging to *Narendrakula* (royal family). The Jaina works like Divyavadana and Mahaparinirbana Sutta describe the Mauryas as the scion of a Kshyatriya clan called *'Moriya'* (*Moriyanam khattiyanam vamse*). The Moriyas were a ruling clan of Pippalivana during the time of Buddha and from Moriya the word Maurya has come. The town of More, which lies very near to Patna (Pataliputra) in the opinion of Buddhaprakash was the home of the Mauryas.

The very fact that Chandragupta was chosen by Kautilya, an orthodox as well as learned Brahmin proves the fact beyond doubt that he must have been a Kshyatriya if not a Brahmin. He couldn't be a Sudra because that was not permitted in Hindu system. Besides, Chandragupta had emerged as a natural leader to overthrow the Nandas and to liberate northwest India form the Greek control. As a matter of fact the entire exercise of Kautilya to oust the Nandas was due to the fact that they were of low origin belonging to Sudra caste and secondly because they had insulted Kautilya on some occasion. Hence in that case it is not expected that Kautilya would like to place a man of low origin on the throne after the ouster of the Nandas. That would bring disgrace for him before the eyes of the people, as one who was making political capital out of the low birth of his rival was projecting another man of base birth.

According to tradition as preserved in the Buddhist texts Chandragupta's father was the chief of the Maurya clan who died in a border fray. His wife had to seek safety at far off Purushapura or Kusumapura or Pataliputra where she gave birth to Chandragupta posthumously. Therefore, a cowherd brought up Chandragupta as a boy in poverty and hunger first, then a hunter. But his leadership qualities attracted Chanakya when he happened to pass through the village. Being attracted by the promise of greatness in the boy he took him to Taxila and gave him proper education and training and finally projected him against the Nandas.

Sandrokottus or Andrakottus (Chandragupta as described in the Greek sources) met Alexander during the latter's Indian conquest, probably with an intention to seek his help to conquer Magadha. But Alexander did not agree to proceed as far as Magadha for various reasons, of his own and left India. However, Chandragupta incurred the displeasure of Alexander either by his outspokenness or by his rashness to such an extent that the later had to give orders to kill him. Chandragupta somehow escaped but was further determined to liberate India not only from the Nanda rule but also from the Greek rule. In any case it is generally believed that Chandragupta probably received military training under Alexander, which enabled him to succeed later. After the death of Alexander in 323 B.C., his Indian territory was divided into different *satrapies*. This gave an opportunity to Chandragupta to organize an invasion against the Greeks.

CONQUESTS

The Pali work Mahavamsatika describes that both Chanakya and Chandragupta started collecting recruits (*Balam*) from different places to form a large army

(*Mahabalakayam*). According to Arthasastra the army was recruited from five classes of people such as (i) *Choras* and *Pratirodhakas* (rubbers and bandits), (ii) *Mlechchhas* (barbarians) such as the Sakas, Yavanas, Bahlikas and the Kirata highlanders, (iii) *Chora-ganas* (organised gangs of brigands), (iv) Attavikas (forest tribes) and (v) *Sastropajivi-Srenis* (warrior class). Further he established friendly alliance with the Himalayan king Parvataka who often supported his army.

The conquest of Chandragupta Maurya had four distinct phases,

(i) War of liberation form the Greeks,

(ii) Overthrow of the Nandas,

(iii) War with Seleucus Nikator,

(iv) Expansion to west and south India.

War of Liberation of Northwest

The death of Alexander resulted in the internecine quarrel among his generals. The Indians also demonstrated against the aggressive rule of the Greeks and finally murdered the Greek Satraps, Nicanar and Phillipus in 323 B.C. Chandragupta immediately moved to the northwest to take advantage of the situation. The areas of northwest fell to him rapidly until he reached the Indus in 321 B.C. First of all he conquered Sindh from the Greeks and then gradually overthrew all the Greek rulers conquering entire Punjab region upto Indus. In 321 B.C. the Partition Treaty of Triparadicus acknowledged Chandragupta's supremacy over the northwest India.

Overthrow of the Nandas

The success in Punjab acted as a stepping-stone for achieving a bigger mission in life i.e. the throne of Magadha or the elimination of the wicked Nanda rule. Despite his unpopularity, Dhana Nanda was a very powerful ruler whose military strength had struck terror in the heart of even Alexander, the Great. Hence, it was not an easy task for Chandragupta. Curtius, estimated the military strength of Dhana Nanda as 2,00,000 infantry, 20,000 cavalry, 2,000 chariots and 3,000 elephants. In the war against the Nandas, Chandragupta had initial failure because of his faulty strategy in directly attacking the capital of the country without adequate garrison to defend the rear. In his second attempt he rectified the mistake and adopted the correct method of conquering other cities and garrisoning them in his march to Pataliputra. The Nanda army led by Bhaddasala was defeated in a fierce battle at Pataliputra. The fate of Dhanananda after the war is not known for certain. Normally it is believed that either he died in the war or was killed. According to the Jainawriter Hemachandra he was not killed but was allowed to leave the kingdom. Thus, the Mauryan rule was enthroned over Magadha in 322 B.C.

War with Seleucus Nikator

While Chandragupta was busy in laying the foundation of his empire in India, the Greek king Seleucus after assuming the sovereignty over Alexander's eastern possessions was moving towards India to recover the lost possessions of his master. Appianus describes that Seleucus crossed the Indus and attacked Chandragupta. But unlike Alexander, who encountered a divided India, Seleucus had to face strong and organized opposition under an able leader. The details of the conflict are not known but finally in 305 B.C., Seleucus had to purchase peace by ceding four satrapies to Chandragupta viz. Aria, Arachosia, Gedrosia and Paropanisadai (Herat, Kandahar, Makran and Kabul). It has been suggested on dubious grounds that Hellena the daughter of Seleucus was given in marriage to either Chandragupta or Bindusara. As a mark of friendship Chandragupta presented the Greek king with 500 elephants and some Indian drugs. Like the details of the conflict, the result of the war is also not known. But as the provisions of the peace were unequal and in favour of Chandragupta the result of the war can be imagined. A permanent bond was cemented between India and Greece by sending Meghasthenes as the Greek Ambassador to the Mauryan court. Meghasthenes lived at Pataliputra up to circa 299 B.C. and compiled an excellent account of contemporary India, known as Indica.

Conquest of Western India

After the occupation of Magadhan capital, Pataliputra, Chandragupta initiated the process of consolidation and gradual expansion of the empire. The Greek writer Plutarch gives him the credit of subduing the whole of India with a force of 6,00,000 infantry, 30,000 cavalry and 9,000 elephants. The expression 'whole of India' may be an exaggeration yet he did conquer a large part of India in all directions. With Magadha and Bengal in the east and upto the borders of Persia in northwest under his rule he turned his attention towards west and south of India. According to the Girnar Rock Inscription of Rudradaman I, he annexed Saurashtra and Kathiawar in western India. The Jainatraditions suggest that he also occupied Avanti including its capital Ujjain. The discovery of Asokan Rock Edicts at Sopara in Thane district of Maharastra suggest that the region was conquered by Chandragupta Maurya because the conquests of Bindusara and Asoka are very clearly defined wherein this area is not included.

Conquest of South India

The invasions of Chandragupta Maurya towards south are not mentioned anywhere directly, but can be proved indirectly. As such Chandragupta Maurya was too busy in consolidating his empire in north India for which he could not devote enough time for his southern campaigns. In any case, there are evidences that Chandragupta extended the Mauryan Empire in south upto Mysore and Vellore where the Rock Edicts II and VIII of Asoka are located respectively. Since Asoka did not fight any war except the Kalinga war and since Bindusara has no record of being a warrior who was rather fond of 'dried figs, sweet wine and sophists', the territory must have been conquered by Chandragupta. The existence of a city by the name, Nau-Nanda-Dehra on the banks of river Godavari testifies the fact that Chandragupta succeeded the region as new Nanda. According to the Jaina traditions Chandragupta became a Jaina towards the end and retired to a place called Sravanabelgola in Mysore, which must have been a part and parcel of his empire.

Hence, Chandragupta's empire consisted of almost whole of India in all directions. In the northwest the empire extended upto the Persian kingdom. In the west it extended upto the sea near Saurashtra. In the east it comprised of Magadha and Bengal. In the south it extended upto Mysore and Nellore.

ADMINISTRATION

Chandragupta was not only a great conqueror, was also a great administrator. The Arthasastra of Kautilya and the Indica of Meghasthenes shed considerable light on his administrative system. The administrative system of Chandragupta Maurya becomes all the more important in view of the fact that he was the first emperor of the first empire of Indian history. It was a highly difficult task to devise an appropriate system of administration to run effectively in such a vast empire. In the days when communication between different places was not easy it was difficult to control the administration from a single centre. Traditionally it is believed that Kautilya played an important role in the administration as the Prime Minister of Chandragupta Maurya.

The Mauryan administration adopted a strong centralised monarchical set-up with a welfare state. The people formed an important element of the state. The laws were made on rational basis as against scriptural rules. Laws supported by reason (*Nyaya*) could supersede the injunctions of the sacred texts (Sastra). Chandragupta solved the problem of distance in administration by splitting up the unwieldy area into convenient and manageable units with a decentralised scheme of administration. He established three-tier administration such as central administration, provincial administration and local administration.

Central Administration

The king was the supreme head of the state with military, judicial, executive and legislative functions.

Meghasthenes has represented the king as a conscientious and industrious official. As the pivot of the administrative superstructure he remained in the court throughout the day without any rest. He used to attend to public petitions and meted out justice, uninterrupted even when he had his hair combed, dressed, body massaged etc. He issued *Sasanas* (orders) with authority of law for the guidance of the people.

The government at the centre consisted of two main parts such as the Councillors and Assessors (*Mahamatras* and *Amatyas* or *Sachivas*). The Council of Minister or the Councillors advised the king in the management of the administration. Kautilya mentions that a single wheel can never move. Hence, the king shall employ ministers and hear their opinion. The *Sachivas* or *Amatyas* were small in number but excelled in wisdom. According to Kautilya the *Rajatva* (Sovereignty) was possible only with the assistance of the Council of Ministers. The Council of Ministers was an advisory body whose devotion to duty, integrity and wisdom had been fully tested. There was an inner council consisting of four high-ranking ministers. They were called *Mahamantri* (Prime- minister) *Purohit* (Chief- priest), *Senapati* (Commander- in- chief) and *Yuvaraj* (Crown prince). There were fourteen other junior ministers who together with the inner Council formed the Council of Minister (*Mantriparisad*). Hence in toto there were eighteen Ministers, called the eighteen *Tirthas*.

1. Maha Mantri (Chief minister)
2. Purahita (Chief Priest)
3. Senapati (Commander- in- chief)
4. Yuvaraj (Crown prince)

5. Dauvarika (Door keeper)
6. Antarvesika (Officer-in-charge of harem)
7. Prasastri (Chief of prisons)
8. Samaharta (Collector general)
9. Sannidhata (Treasurer)
10. Pradeshatra (Divisional commissioner)
11. Nayaka (City constable)
12. Paura (Governor of the capital)
13. Vyavaharika (Chief judge)
14. Karmantika (Chief of mines)
15. Mantriparishadhyaksa (President of the council)
16. Dandapala (Police chief)
17. Durgapala (Chief of home defence)
18. Antapala (Chief of frontier defence)

In addition to the Council of Minister there were a number of Superintendents (*Adhyakshyas*) in charge of various departments of the government. They were *Kosa* (treasury), *Akara* (mines) *Loha* (metal), *Laksha* (mint), *Lavana* (salt), *Suvarna* (gold), K*osthagara* (store house), *Panya* (trade), *Kupya* (forest products), *Ayudhagara* (armoury), *Pautava* (weights and measures), *Mana* (measurement of land), *Sulka* (tolls), *Sutra* (spinning and weaving), *Sita* (cultivation of crown lands), *Sura* (liquor), *Suna* (slaughter house), *Mudra* (passport), *Vivita* (pasture), *Dyuta* (gambling), *Bandhanagara* (jail), *Gau* (cattle) *Nau* (shipping), *Pattana* (ports), *Ganika* (courtesans) etc.

Provincial Administration

The empire was divided into a number of provinces, which were subdivided into *Aharas* or

Vishayas (districts). The exact number of provinces at the time of Chandragupta is not known but at the time of Asoka there were five provinces including Kalinga. Hence, it can be said that there were four provinces during the time of Chandragupta. They were (i) *Prachya* (ii) *Uttara Patha* (iii) *Avanti Ratha* and (iv) *Dakshina Patha.*

Prachya: The Eastern part of the empire or the province of Magadha with its capital at *Palimbothara* (Pataliputra) constituted the Prachya. It was under the direct control of the king.

Uttara Patha (northern province): Its capital was at Taxila. A prince of royal blood called the Kumar ruled it.

Avanti Ratha (western province): Its capital was at Ujjain. It was placed under the administration of a Kumara.

Dakhina Patha (southern province): Its capital was at Suvarnagiri. It was under the administration of a Kumar.

The provinces were divided into Divisions (*Pradesatris*) with a Commissioner in charge of the administration. The Divisions were sub-divided into *Aharas* or *Vishayas* (districts). The head of the district administration was the *Sthanika.* A class of officers called *Gopas* assisted him. Each *Gopa* was in-change of ten villages. The *Grama* or village was the smallest unit of administration. Each district was divided into a number of villages. The *Gramika* or *Gramani* or the village headman was in-charge of the village administration.

In the Mauryan administration the villages enjoyed considerable amount of autonomy and self-government. The villagers generally elected the *Gramika*. The elders of the village (*Gramavriddhas*) assisted the village administration. They had the responsibility to manage the affairs of the village including the judicial functions.

Municipal Administration

The Mauryan period was remarkable for the rapid growth of urban centres. The administration of the cities and regulation of various aspects of urban life formed a special chapter of Arthasastra. Meghasthenes has left a fairly detailed description of the administration of the city of Pataliputra (Palimbothra). The Jatakas mention the names of the cities like Taxila, Ujjain, Isila, Suvarnagiri and Kausambi besides the capital city of Pataliputra.

Meghasthenes describes the city of Pataliputra as the largest city in India being 80 stadia long (15.5 km) and 15 stadia wide (2.5 km) and was defended by a wooden wall with sixty-four gates and 570 towers. The city was further protected by a moat outside the wooden wall measuring 606 feet wide and 60 feet deep.

The administration of the city was under the Municipal Commission, which consisted of six boards of five members each. Meghasthenes calls the town officials as Astanomei. The **First Board** looked after the affairs relating to industrial arts. Besides enforcing the use of good material and fixing of proper wages, the artisans were its special concern. Anybody disabling a craftsman was given death sentence by the state. The **Second Board** looked after the movements and needs of the foreigners. They were provided lodging, medical facilities etc. In case of their death their remains were interned and belongings were handed over to the claimants. The existence of such a board shows that there were large numbers of foreigners. The **Third Board** was responsible for the registration of births and deaths. The **Fourth Board** was entrusted with the responsibility of trade and commerce. It regulated sale of commodities and checked the misuse of weights and measures. The **Fifth Board** supervised manufacturers who were by law under penalty of fine, prevented from mixing old and new articles. The **Sixth Board** enforced payment of tithe on goods sold. Evasion of tax was treated severely. In addition to the special boards, the commissioners in their collective capacity dealt all matters concerning public welfare such as repairs of public work, maintenance of markets, harbours, and temples, regulation of prices etc.

Kautilya does not mention about any of these boards. He refers to a Nagarika or Nagaradhyaksa with Sthanikas and Gopas under him for the city administration.

In any case it is not known whether the municipal administration setup as described by Meghasthenes was an elected body or its members were appointed by the state. In all probability the latter was the case although they enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy. Further it is also not known whether the municipal administration applied to all the cities or was restricted only to the city of Pataliputra.

Military Administration

Megasthenes gives a detailed description of Mauryan military administration, which was considered vital for the security of the newly established empire. As such, he inherited a vast army from his predecessors and further raised its strength to 6,00.000 infantry, 30,000 cavalry, 9,000 elephants and 8,000 war chariots. A war office consisting of thirty members, divided into six boards of five members each efficiently maintained this huge army. The **First Board** was in charge of admiralty, the **Second** in-charge of infantry, the **Third** cavalry, **Fourth** chariots, **Fifth** elephants and the **Sixth** transport, commissariat and army service. The soldiers received regular pay from the state and formed a standing army. The equipment and other required materials were supplied in abundance. Taken together, the Mauryan army was strong and efficient not only because of its number but also because of its efficient administration. Having a vast army with four branches such as infantry, cavalry, elephants and chariots with independent control was the normal pattern of that age. The co-ordinate supply and admiralty departments were innovations of Chandragupta.

Revenue Administration

Chandragupta collected a number of taxes from the people in order to meet the expenses of civil administration, military administration, public utility works, irrigation projects etc. The taxes like customs and excise duties, fee for licenses to the traders, tax on forests, mines and salt were collected.

Land revenue (*Bhaga*) was the main source of income. Normally the share of the crown was 1/6 of the gross product, but the proportion varied from place to place and under different circumstances. The royal income also included dues from tolls and ferries, fines and benevolence, fees from professional experts etc. Another important source of revenue was *Bali.* It was an extra impost from the payment of which certain tracts were exempted.

The collection of revenue and the maintenance of accounts was the responsibility of the Collector General, (*Samaharta*). For the collection of revenue from different sources different specialized administrative departments were created. While the *Samaharta* was in-charge of the collection of revenue from different sources the *Sannidhata* was in-charge of the state treasury and in-charge of saving and accumulation of revenue. There was another officer, the Accountant General (*Akshapataladhyakha*) who was in charge of currency (*Akshapatala*) and accounts (*Ganana*). His duty was to co-ordinate between different revenue departments.

Chandragupta paid special attention towards agriculture and irrigation. The director of agriculture (*Sitadhyakshya*) was in-charge of cultivation of crown lands. Constructing dams against the mountain streams created artificial reservoirs. Sudarshana in Saurashtra was one such reservoir.

The cultivable land was measured. Different standards of measurement were used for different kinds of lands such as military land, forestland, revenue free land etc. Rent was fixed for cultivable land with the cultivator for life. Villages were separated from each other by well-defined boundaries such as river, hill, forest, embankments, trees etc.

Administration of Justice

Arthasatra refers to four sources of law such as sacred precept (*Dharma*), agreement (*Vyavahara*), custom (*Charitra*) and royal decree (*Rajasasana*). The king was to administer law (*Anusasana*) in accordance with four rules such as *Dharma*, *Vyavahara*, *Lokachara* and *Nyaya*.

King was the head of the judiciary. The king's court was the Supreme Court. There were regular law courts in provinces, districts and villages. Persons, wellversed in *Dharma* were appointed as Judges, called *Dharmasthas*. They were recruited from among the rank of *Amatyas*. The elders of the village decided disputes at the village level. Penal laws were very severe. Offenders were ordinarily punished with fines. Capital sentence was very common. Kautilya prescribed death even for petty offences by government servants. Judicial torture like whipping in public was in operation.

The courts were of two types such as the *Dharmasthiya* (civil court) and *Kantkasodhana* (criminal court). The civil courts consisted of three *Dharmasthas* and three *Amatyas*. The criminal courts consisted of three *Pradesatris* and three *Amatyas*. Under the king there was the Chief Justice (*Vyavaharika*).

Spy System

The intelligence system under the Mauryas was very well organized. The classical writers refer to a class of employees called Overseers or Inspectors (*Episkopoi*) who kept an eye on the happenings throughout the country. They kept a close watch over the government officials and the people. According to Arthasastra there were two groups of spies *Samsthaher* (stationary spies) and *Sancharahi* (wandering spies). The women of easy virtue were often engaged as spies. Chandragupta depended on the capacity of women and engaged female guards in the royal palace. The spies used to send secrete reports to the king and could reach the king even bypassing official hierarchy. They used to convey information directly to the king. The espionage system was maintained with highest efficiency and secrecy.

Social Welfare Activities

A royal road was constructed from Pataliputra to northwest frontier with a total length of about 1840 kms. Stones indicating the bye-roads and distance marked every mile of the road. This was the precursor of the Grand Trunk Road. For the purpose of irrigation, canals, lakes, tanks were constructed. Sudarshana Lake was one such lake. Construction of rural roads, waterways, markets and village settlements were given priority. Relief measures were provided to the widows, orphans and the physically handicapped. Hospitals were established throughout the empire.

Last Days

The Jainawork Rajavalikatha mentions that after an eventful and glorious career Chandragupta Maurya towards the end of his life became a Jaina ascetic and abdicated in favour of his son in circa 300 B.C. He proceeded to Sravanabelgola near Mysore in the company of the Jainasaint, Bhadrabahu and many other monks. There he ended his life by deliberate slow starvation in the orthodox Jainamanner in circa 299 B.C. The place has been named as Chandragiri. His son, from his queen Durdhara, Bindusara succeeded him.

Estimate

The achievements of Chandragupta Maurya entitle him the rank among the greatest and most successful rulers of Indian history. He was a soldier, a statesman and an administrator of highest rank.

Chandragupta Maurya established the **first empire** of Indian history. He put an end to the centrifugal forces like the existence of small kingdoms and republics and created a strong centralised government in monarchical order. Although there are references to earlier empires, yet those were based on myths and legends without any historical record. Chandragupta Maurya was the first historical figure that organised a vast empire. His empire consisted of territories in the east, west, north and south of India. He was the first ruler to rule over north India and south India together. His empire roughly extended from Afghanistan in northwest and Saurashstra in west to Bengal in the east, from Kashmir in the north to Mysore in the south.

Chandragupta Maurya has the credit of **liberating India** from the foreign invaders. He defeated the Greeks and liberated the northwestern India from their control. His empire therefore consisted of the territories, which were not included even in the British India. He defeated two prominent Greek Generals Eudemus in 317 B.C. and Seleucus Nikator in 305 B.C.

He **defeated the Nandas** and established the Maurya dynasty. The Nandas had become very unpopular because of their Sudra origin. Hence, Chanakya with the help of Chandragupta put an end to the Nanda rule and placed Chandragupta Maurya on the throne.

Chandragupta Maurya was responsible for establishing a **unified strong** and **centralised administration**. Entire India was placed under one political system, which for the first time brought political unity. The administrative machinery set up by Chandragupta was the framework of all future administrative systems of India. In other words he laid the foundation of the administrative machinery that lasted for centuries. He introduced the system of administration and government by **committees and commissions**. Separate commissions and committees were formed with specific responsibilities and clearly demarcated functions.

He maintained a **large and well-equipped army**. Special attention was given towards the administration of the army. Different Boards were created to look after the army administration.

He was responsible for the establishment of **Municipal administration**. Special attention was given towards the administration of the city of Pataliputra. It is however not known if the municipal administration was prevalent in other cities in the line of Pataliputra.

Special measures were taken for **the development of agriculture**. Steps were taken for **irrigation** by constructing artificial lakes.

Proper attention was given towards the **care of foreigners**. Starting from the Greek ambassador Meghasthenes, all the foreigners who came to India were treated well and a special Board was created to look after their welfare.

He was a **benevolent ruler.** Although he combined all the powers in him, yet he was not a tyrannical despot. He effectively maintained internal peace, discharged proper justice to the people and paid proper attention towards the welfare activities like sanitation, works of public utility and construction of hospitals.

Although he was a Jaina towards the end of his life, his subjects enjoyed the **freedom of religion**. Even books of rival faiths have no mention of religious persecution by Chandragupta Maurya. His marriage with the Greek princess was a daring step in Hindu society. He was a **patron of learning** and **literature.** The authors of Arthasastra (Kautilya), Kalpasutra (Bhadrabahu) and Indica (Meghasthenes) adorned his court.

According to R.C.Majumdar: "To Chandragupta the history of India owes gorgeous phenomena- a swift war of liberation, a vast empire and India politically and administratively united. For the first time the writ of one Emperor ran in the country through a hierarchy of centrally appointed officers."

BINDUSARA (300-273 B.C.)

Chandragupta Maurya was succeeded by his son, Bindusara. The Greek writers called him as *Amitrachates*, which in Sanskrit has been interpreted as *Amitraghata* or 'the slayer of foes'. The Jaina work Rajavalikatha calls him Sinhasena. The Puranas call him Bindusara. He ruled from 300 B.C. to 273 B.C. Very little is known about his reign. The greatest achievement of Bindusara was that he maintained the vast empire of Chandragupta Maurya in tact. He also maintained good contact with the contemporary Greek rules.

Bindusara seems to have maintained friendly relation with the Hellenistic powers. According to Strabo the king of Syria, Antiochus I dispatched an ambassador named Deimachos to his court. According to Pliny, Ptolemy Philadelphus, the king of Egypt sent an envoy named Dionysios. However, it is not clear whether these ambassadors came to India during the reign of Bindusara or during the reign of Asoka ?

According to tradition, Bindusara had sixteen wives and as many as 101 sons. Susima or Sumana was his eldest son. Asokavardhana or Asoka was his second son from his wife Subhadrangi. Tishya was the youngest son. Asoka was appointed as the Viceroy of Avanti. Prince Susima was appointed as the Viceroy of Taxila.Since he failed to supperss a revolt, Bindusara sent Asoka to suppress it, which he successfully did. Bindusara died in 273 B.C. His death gave rise to a struggle for succession among his sons, which lasted for four years i.e. from 273 B.C. to 269 B.C. In 269 B.C. Asoka was coronated as the king of Magadha. However, for all these four years the throne was under his control. The formal coronation ceremony took place after the struggle for succession was over. It is traditionally believed that Asoka killed all his 99 brothers except the youngest one Tishya, after which the coronation took place.

Chapter - 5

ASOKA

(273/269-232 B.C.)

He inherited an extensive and well-organised empire and proved fully worthy of his heritage. He perfectly realized the requirements of the age and as its true representative moulded his policy in such a way that India came to occupy the foremost place among the civilized nations of the world.

Only about a hundred years before, Asoka was considered as one of the Mauryan rulers without any specific importance. In 1837 James Princep deciphered an inscription written in Brahmi script belonging to a king known as *Devanmpiya Piyadassi.* In the long list of Indian rulers the name of *Piyadassi* didn't find a place until then. When the Sri Lankan Buddhist chronicles were examined things became clearer. In 1915 another inscription was deciphered which belonged to King Asoka, *Piyadassi,* which confirmed the theory that Asoka of Mauryan dynasty was the same as *Piyadassi.*

Early Career

According to Buddhist literature Bindusara had 16 wives and as many as 101 sons. Susima or Sumana was his eldest son. Asokavardhan or Asoka was his second son from his wife Subhadrangi. Tisya was the youngest son. At the age of 18 Asoka was appointed as the Viceroy of Avanti. Prince Susima was the Viceroy of Taxila. Susima failed to suppress a revolt in Taxila for which Bindusara sent Asoka, who succeeded in suppressing the rebellion. After the death of Bindusara in 273 B.C. Asoka ascended the throne with the skilful machination of the minister Radhagupta. The formal coronation however took place four years later in 269 B.C. This delay in coronation has been generally ascribed to a bitter fratricidal war for succession.

The Sri Lankan Buddhist records state that Asoka killed his 99 brothers except the youngest one, Tisya. Many have refuted this brutality as the Rock Edict V refers to his several brothers, sisters and other relatives. It is said that the Buddhist records deliberately make the fratricidal war, a massacre of the brothers and describe Asoka as ***Chandasoka*** (cruel Asoka) before his conversion to Buddhism after which he became ***Dharmasoka*** (righteous Asoka). In other words the principles of Buddhism had enough strength to convert a *Chandasoka*, even the one who massacred 99 of his brothers just for throne to *Dharmasoka*.

Asoka is referred to as *Devanamapiya* (beloved of Gods) and *Piyadassi* (of amiable looks) in his inscriptions. In many sources he has been described as '*Devanamapiya Piyadassi raja*' without any reference to Asoka. It is only in his Maski Edict and in the Junagarh Rock Inscription of Rudradaman I, the name Asoka has been associated with '*Devanampiya Piyadassi*'. In the Sarnath inscription of Kumaradevi the name *Dharmasoka* (righteous Asoka) is found. It is often argued that since his own records give the name, as *Piyadassi* except in two versions, the original name of the king might have been *Piyadassi*. According to Buddhaghosa the real name of the Crown Prince was *Piyadassi*. He was called Asoka only after he had seized power (*Piyadassi nama Kumaro Chattam Asoka nama Dharmaraja hutva*). In the Greek sources he is often named as *Piyadassi* (Piodasses). In contrast to many other Indian rulers, this great emperor of India, only used the title of Raja not many other high sounding epithets or titles.

SOURCES

The unique feature of the history of Asoka is that he has himself left permanent records of his reign in the form of Inscriptions on Rocks and Pillars, which stand till today. Asoka was the first Indian king to issue edicts in order to proclaim the details of his activities. We hear the voice of the great ruler himself explaining the purpose behind many of his actions. The Inscriptions of Asoka are like his autobiography. In this connection he probably imitated the Achaemenian emperor, Darius I. Darius used to begin by saying: "Thus saith the king Darious....". Asoka also begins his Inscriptions by saying: "The king *Devanampiya Piyadassi* speaks thus."

The Rock Edicts of Asoka are divided into three classes:

(i) The Fourteen Rock Edicts - These comprise a set of 14 instructions found incised at eight different places. Two of these are in Orissa at Dhauli and Jaugada. These two are generally called as Kalinga Edicts. The other Edicts are located at Shahbazgarhi (Peshawar district), Manshera (Hazra district), Girnar (Junagarh), Sopara (Thana district), Kalsi (Dehradun district) and Yeragudi (Kurnool district - Madras).

(ii) Minor Rock Edicts- These are a set of two inscriptions one of which is incised at 10 different places. These exist at Bairat (Jaipur). Sasaram (Bihar), Rupnath (Jabalpur), Maski (Raichur), Govimath and Palkigudi (Hyderabad), Brahmagiri, Siddapura and Jatinga Rameswar (Mysore) and Yeragudi (Kurnool).

(iii) Seven Pillar Edicts – A set of seven inscriptions are engraved in pillars presently at different places such as Allahabad, Lauriya – Araraj, Lauriya – Nandangarh, Rampurwa, Delhi – Topra and Delhi – Meerut.

There are some other inscriptions, which are miscellaneous in character but are very important. The unique Bhabru Edict, Rumenidei and Nigali Sagar Edicts, the Pillar Edicts of Sanchi, Sarnath and Kausambi and the three Cave Inscriptions at Barbara are very important.

There are as many as thirty-six different inscriptions at forty-five places all over India including Afghanistan, which throw light on his career. These are composed in Prakrit and are written in Brahmi script in most parts of the empire. In the northwest these appear in Aramaic and Kharosthi script written from right to left. In Afghanistan it is in Greek script

Among the material remains of the period we have a considerable amount of **numismatic** evidence, some artifacts from archaeological excavations and art objects. The numismatic evidence largely consists of Silver and

Copper Punch-marked coins and Silver bar coins which were in circulation throughout the empire. These coins are the earliest surviving coins in India and its symbols were official marks.

The **'art remains'** like the animal capital of single lion, single bull, four lions and single elephant are considered as sources of information. The archaeological excavations of the recent years have unearthed Pottery types, which can be used among other things to determine the cultural levels.

The **Buddhist records** like the Jatakas, Digha Nikaya, Divyavadana and the Sri Lankan Buddhist chronicles like Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa contain information about the reign of Asoka. The Puranic sources refer to one Asoka as a Mauryan ruler.

KALINGA WAR

The earliest important event recorded in his inscriptions is the conquest of Kalinga, which took place in 261 B.C., the 8th regnal year or the 12th year from his accession to the throne. His XIIIth major Rock Edict clearly describes the effects of the Kalinga war and indicates the policy, which he perused there after for the rest of his life.

Kalinga war was the turning point of his career. He went to Kalinga to fight as an aggressor but returned back with great remorse by witnessing the horrors of the war. Instead of continuing the policy of aggression after the success in Kalinga war he became a Buddhist and gave up war. The Buddhist records, which described him as ***Chandasoka*** for killing his 99 brothers in the fratricidal war started to call him as ***Dharmasoka*** for his conversion to Buddhism hereafter.

The name of Asoka is written in the pages of history not in golden letters but in the blood of Kalinga. But for this war, Asoka probably would have been recorded in history as a despot, a tyrant or a cruel ruler. Instead, this war earned him the sober titles like *Devanampiya Piyadassi* in direct contrast to *Chandasoka*.

Asoka inherited a vast empire from his father and grandfather, which included provinces from Kabul and Kandahar in the northwest to Mysore in the south. Kalinga was the only country, which was not conquered by Chandragupta Maurya. Hence, from the very beginning Asoka had an eye on Kalinga. However, he took long eight years to prepare for a war against Kalinga.

Causes

Kalinga with her political, economic and military power and geographic contiguity was naturally regarded as a potential danger for the growing Magadhan Empire. The greatness of Kalinga must have been the reason for which Chandragupta Maurya who could subdue almost whole of India, didn't dare to attack this neighbouring kingdom. Hence as a **matter of prestige** it became imperative for Asoka to conquer it. As such he had shown great courage as a Viceroy in suppressing rebellion in Taxila.

Kalinga had been able to resist the Magadhan expansion, which had commenced right since 6th century B.C., i.e. from the time of Bimbisara. Hence there existed a sort of **cold war** between Magadha and Kalinga.

Mauryan Empire had surrounded Kalinga from three sides except the eastern side where there was the Bay of Bengal. Kalinga existed as a thorn on Mauryan imperial authority. Strategically it was like **a dragger drawn at the heart of Magadha.**

Important economic and commercial factors were also responsible for the war. Kalinga was **strategically located**. It blocked the land and sea routes from Magadha to south India. Without control over Kalinga, Magadhan rulers had to take a circuitous route across the Vindhyas to go to south for whatever purpose.

Magadha was a **landlocked country**. It had no access to the sea. The nearest seaport was Tamralipti, which was a Kalingan port. Kalinga with a number of ports monopolised the overseas trade in Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean. Hence, in order to have control over the sea the control over Kalinga was absolutely necessary. Besides, the **prosperity of Kalinga** was ascribed to its flourishing overseas trade. Hence the prosperity of Kalinga might have attracted his cupidity.

The policy of imperialism as described in Arthasastra required the rulers to wage wars against their neighbours, both for offensive as well as defensive reasons. Since Asoka had inherited entire India, as a natural policy of aggression Kalinga had to be conquered by him. Hence, in order to be sure of victory, Asoka took long eight years to prepare for a war against Kalinga, as the defeat in the war would mean an end of his imperialism. He would be considered as a weak ruler and other kingdoms would become rebellious.

It has been often argued that a non-monarchical form of government (discussed later) was ruling over

Kalinga. If this was true then this itself becomes the most important cause for the war, a war between the most powerful Indian Emperor and a powerful non-monarchical form of government. This becomes **a war of ideas and ideologies**, a struggle for supremacy.

Kalinga was a famous centre of Buddhism. Hence for a fanatic ruler like Asoka (*Chandasoka*) **religion** could have acted as a cause of the war. If his intolerance towards Buddhism caused the war the result turned the table against him and he became the greatest exponent of Buddhism.

According to a legend, Asoka fell in love with **Karuvaki**, the beautiful princess of the fishermen community of Kalinga and wanted to marry her. In order to achieve his objective he wanted to conquer the land and marry the princess by force, if need be. This legend has no base, but in the list of the names of the queens of Asoka the name of Karuvaki appears as the mother of his son Tivara.

The war

We do not know the details of the war. Asoka has made brief reference to its results in his Rock Edict XIII. The reference is not sufficient to draw a picture of the war. It reveals that in the war as many as 1,00,000 people were killed and 1,50,000 were taken captive. Many more died as an aftermath of the war due to starvation and injuries. The figures indicate the overall picture of the great devastation caused by the Kalinga War.

Sources are silent about the political condition of contemporary Kalinga including the strength of its military force. However, the figures indicated above, give an insight to the strength of the Kalingan army. Atleast the army must have included 2,50,000 soldiers if not more. For the size of Kalingan kingdom this number seems to be very high, because the army of the vast Magadhan Empire consisted of 6,00,000 infantry.

There is no reference to the political condition of Kalinga, the type of government that existed there and the ruler whom he defeated. He has always referred to Kalinga as the Kalingas. Scholars therefore believe that Kalinga was a non-monarchical form of government, with a plural head of the state. It is argued that the people of Kalinga felt so much involved in the war that not only its army, but also almost the entire able-bodied male population within the capable age group went to the battlefield. In no other case the number of army of Kalinga can reach that strength. Hence, either this conclusion is true or the figures given by Asoka are wrong.

Effects

The conquest of Kalinga was the capstone of the imperial edifice of Magadha with which the rise of Magadha was rounded off. If Kalinga War was fought as a part of Magadhan imperialism the victory in the war was expected to encourage Asoka for further attempts. But Kalinga War produced a very different effect on Asoka. The war was the **turning point** in his career. The countless dead in the battlefield mocked at his strength and from the dead a new king was born. The horrors of the war brought intense feelings of remorse and were responsible in drawing his life towards Buddhism. Instead of going for further wars he ended his warlike career and **seethed his sword forever**. He has expressed his remorse in his Rock Edict XIII.

It is interesting to note that the Rock Edict XIII was promulgated after four years of the war in his 12th regnal year at far off Shahbazgarhi in Afghanistan, where in, the king felt remorse. The two separate Kalinga Edicts that were promulgated immediately after the war don't contain any information on the feeling of remorse.

The Rock Edict XIII reads: "when the king *Piyadassi*, the Beloved of Gods, had been consecrated eight years, Kalinga was conquered. 1,50,000 men were carried away from there, 1,00,000 were slain there and nearly as many died. There after when Kalinga had been conquered, the Beloved of God now (*Adhuna*) felt a strong inclination for Dharma, desire for Dharma and instruction in Dharma. On conquering Kalinga the Beloved of Gods felt remorse......."

In the process of conquering Kalinga **he was himself conquered** by the spirit of Dhamma and was converted into Buddhism by a Buddhist saint, Upagupta immediately after the war. Thus, *Chandasoka* was transformed to *Dharmasoka*. From the historical perspective this transformation had far-reaching significance. The conversion of Asoka into Buddhism brought dramatic changes in the political philosophy. The *Verighosa* (war drum) of Asoka was converted into *Dharmaghosa* (propagation of Dharma). Buddhism, which so far had obscure existence, confined to north India suddenly became an international religion. It ushered in an era of spiritual imperialism flavoured by love in place of militarism. The message of peace, fraternity and nonviolence began to spread.

The newly conquered territory of Kalinga was incorporated in the Magadhan empire and formed its **fifth province** with capital at Tosali near Bhubaneswar. Samapa or modern Jaugada in Ganjam was a divisional headquarters. Hence although Asoka expressed great remorse for the war, yet didn't make it a free country. On the contrary, he consolidated his position in Kalinga. Instead of granting autonomy he kept Kalinga under his direct control for sometime. However he adopted a conciliatory attitude towards the people of Kalinga by favourable administrative measures. He issued special instructions to his officers through the Rock Edicts how to deal with the people of Kalinga.

As a part of his **conciliatory approach** towards the people of Kalinga he issued two special Rock Edicts otherwise known as Kalinga Edicts. These two edicts were addressed to the officers in Kalinga to be especially careful in administration and to be sympathetic towards people. All these show that he was eager to have a benevolent government in Kalinga.

He did not annex the Atavikas or the forest folk who lived in the wild uplands to the west. Asoka after the war could have occupied the Atavika territory but instead of bringing them under his control he showed **special solicitude** towards them in his Rock Edicts.

The victory over Kalinga had its impact on **Magadhan economy**. The control over the ports of Kalinga provided opportunity for overseas trade and soon Indian colonies were established in South East Asia and other places. A flourishing overseas trade brought riches to the kingdom. Asoka also sent Buddhist missionaries to Sri Lanka, Indonesia, China, and Japan, through the sea route and from the Kalingan ports.

Extent of Empire

Asoka ruled over a vast empire. His empire was greater than the British Indian empire. As is well known, during his lifetime he conquered only Kalinga. But he had inherited a vast empire from his predecessors.

The extent of Asokan Empire can be fixed with reasonable accuracy. His own inscriptions on Rocks and Pillars provide internal and external evidences of the extent of his empire. So far as the external evidences are concerned, the limits of the empire can be fixed with the help of the find-spots of his inscriptions, as these contained the proclamations and messages for his subjects. Asoka himself describes his empire as Magadha, Pataliputra, Khalatikapavata (Barabar Hills), Kausambi, Lummini-gama, Kalinga (including Tosali and Samapa), Atavi, (the forest tracts of central India), Suvarnagiri, Isila, Ujjayini and Taxila.

In the **northwest** the empire extended up to the territory of Antiochus II Theos (Amtiyako Yonaraja) of Syria who was his neighbour. He retained his hold over the four Satrapies of Aria (Herat), Arachosia (Kandahar), Gedrosia (Beluchistan) and Paropanisadea (Kabul), which were ceded by Seleucus Nikator to his grandfather Chandragupta. That the southern Afghanistan and parts of Pakistan continued to form parts of his empire is evident from the existence of his Rock Edicts at Shahbazgarhi (Peshawar district) and Mansehra (Hazra district) of West Pakistan. Yuan Chwang also refers to the existence of Asokan Stupas at Kafiristan (Kapisa) and Jalalabad. The accounts of Yuan Chwang and the Rajatarangini of Kalhana include Kashmir under Asokan Empire and state that Asoka founded the city of Srinagar.

The northwestern portions of Asokan Empire were not included in the British Indian Empire.

In the **north** Asoka's authority extended up to Himalayas. The inscriptions near Kalsi, the Rumenidei and Migalisagar Pillars prove the inclusion of Dehradun and the Terrai region. The monuments of Lalitapattan and Rampurwa testify the control over Nepal, at least part of it if not full.

In the **east**, Asokan monuments near Tamralipti and Karnasuvarna (in Bengal), Samatata (Bangladesh) and in Pundravardhan (north Bengal) prove the inclusion of these areas. Assam remained outside his empire.

In the **southeast** the empire extended up to Bay of Bengal. His edicts at Dhauli and Jaugada prove the inclusion of entire Kalinga under his empire.

In the **far south** his territory extended beyond the empire of Chandragupta and included south Canara, Coorg, Malabar and Travancore regions. Roughly his empire in south cut across from Pulicat near Chennai in the east to Chittoldurg district of Mysore in the west where one of his inscriptions is found. The kingdoms of far south such as Cholas, Pandyas, Satyaputras and Keralaputras were well within his sphere of influence. Although they were independent kingdoms, yet they were conquered ideologically and volunteered themselves to be placed under Asokan administration.

In the **west** the Asokan Inscriptions at Girnar and Sopara (Thana district) prove his jurisdiction over Saurashtra and southwestern regions. Besides, it is known from the Junagadh rock inscription of Rudradamana that Yavanaraja Tusaspa was Asoka's viceroy in Saurashtra.

So far as the internal evidence is concerned the Texts of the inscriptions provide us information on the extent of his empire. In the Rock Edict II and XIII, Asoka speaks of certain kingdoms, which existed, on the borders of his empire with which he had friendly relation. He refers to four Tamil kingdoms of south, such as Cholas, Pandyas, Keralaputras and Satyaputras. In the northwest he refers to Greek rulers of Syria, Egypt, Macedonia, and Epirus.

RELIGIOUS POLICY

Asoka is famous in history for his efforts to propagate a universal religion, which could reconcile antagonistic faiths and evolve a compromise with emphasis on the role of moral values in life. His claim to greatness rests not only upon his extent of empire or upon his unique administrative genius or upon his outstanding victory over Kalinga but also for his policy of Dhamma.

After the Kalinga war Asoka became a Buddhist. According to the Sri Lankan chronicles Asoka was first converted to Buddhism by Nigrodha, a boy monk of seven years and that subsequently he came in contact with Moggaliputta-Tissa, the head of the Buddhist *Sangha*. The Buddhist sources however, attribute his conversion to Upagupta.

The Bhabru Edict otherwise called the second Bairat Edict explicitly proves his conversion to Buddhism. It opens with Asoka expressing his reverence to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha in the trinity formula of Buddhism. The Minor Rock Edict I from Brahmagiri read: "I have been a Buddhist layman, *Upasaka* for more than two and half years, but for a year I didn't make much progress. More than a year has passed since I visited the Sangha, and I become more ardent". According to E. Hultzsch the Minor Rock Edict was promulgated in his 10th regnal year. There are many other records to prove this point of view. It is generally believed that the horrors of the sanguinary Kalinga war turned the heart of Asoka and his repentance converted him to Buddhism.

Inspite of the existence of such clear cut proof of his acceptance of Buddhism scholars like H.H. Wilson and others have ventured to dispute his Buddhist faith. The Rajatarangini of Kalhana describes Asoka as a devotee of Siva. A scholar like Edward Thomas holds the view that he was a follower of Jainism because his grandfather Chandragupta Maurya died as a Jaina. Some even go to the extent of saying that his war against Kalinga was due to the fact that he was a Jaina and Kalinga was a Buddhist territory. According to this view naturally enough after the war he was converted into the Buddhism.

He was also a great believer of Brahmanism. The name of Asoka is referred to as *Devanampiya Piyadassi* in all his inscriptions. The very name *Devanampiya* suggests that he was dearer to Gods. Buddhism had no God. So, he must have continued to have his faith in Brahmanism inspite of his belief in Buddhism. He must have inherited his devotion to Hindu Gods. He had no scruples about the slaughter of animals. In the royal kitchen hundreds of animals were being slaughtered. Hence, although Asoka had become a Buddhist he was not an enemy of the Brahmanism and took pride in calling himself as *Devanampiya.*

Asoka was a man of distinctive individuality in the matters of religion. Although his inscriptions confirm his acceptance of Buddhism yet his approach to Buddhism was that of a profound humanist; practical, pragmatic and intensely ethical. He formulated an ethical moral and social scheme, which he called as *Dhamma* (Dharma or the Law Piety). It was not based only on the teachings of Buddha but also was the essence or the '*sara*' of all religions, sometotal of moral virtues.

Asoka's Dhamma was his own invention. Buddhism and Hinduism may have inspired it but in essence it was a fervent plea on the part of a king to suggest a way of life, which was both practical and moral. He tried to build an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual understanding. He was convinced that the schism between the various religions like Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism was bound to weaken the social fabric and political unity of the empire. Hence, he practiced tolerance of all religions and did not identify himself with any one of them although he was closer to Buddhism. In the Rock Edict XII he speaks about the essence (*Sara*) of all religions and warns against glorification of one's own religion and condemnation of others. In Rock Edict VIII, Asoka's meetings with the Brahmanas and Sramanas during his tours have been described.

The Dhamma of Asoka was not simple piety but was a specific code of moral duties laid down for laity and the monks. It was different from the four Noble Truths, the Eight-Fold Path and the Nirvana of Buddhism. He wanted to transform Buddhism from a pure academic religious philosophy to a great social, practical and intellectual force. This was universal and acceptable to the followers of all sects and communities.

He promoted the physical wellbeing of the people along with the measures for spiritual upliftment by means of religion. For Asoka, Dhamma was a way of life based on harmonious blending of social ethics, moral virtues and civic responsibilities.

Asoka was, thus, a pioneer in evolving a secular approach for the state. His policy was aimed at the welfare of the masses. He propagated his universal religion with vigour and enthusiasm. He utilised the state machinery for the propagation of religion. The Rock Edicts were used as the vehicle for the propagation of his Dhamma. The Rock Edict I contains prohibition of slaughter and sacrifice of animals and festive gatherings (*Samajas*), accompanied by drinking and feasting. Rock Edict II mentions certain measures for the welfare of men and animals, like provisions for medical treatment, gardens containing medicinal herbs and construction of roads with shady groves. Rock Edict III preaches liberality to the Brahmanas and the Sramanas. Rock Edict IV describes his policy of Dhamma and the renunciation of war etc. His *Bherighosa* (war drum) turned to Dharma *Ghosa* (drum of piety). Rock Edict V describes the appointment of *Dharma Mahamatras* for the "establishment of Dhamma, promotion of Dhamma and for the welfare and happiness of those devoted to Dhamma". They carried the message of Buddha to the masses. Rock Edict VI defines the relationship between the king and his subjects with the *Mahamatras* acting as the link between the two. Rock Edict VII advocates toleration of all sects. Rock Edict VIII speaks of the pilgrimages or *Dharma Yatras* of Asoka himself to the places associated with Buddhism. Rock Edict IX denounces orthodox ceremonies and rituals and maintains that the practice of morality is far more important than the observance of rituals. Rock Edict X advises his people to practise the principles of Dhamma. Rock Edict XI prescribes moral principles like respect for elders, liberal and charitable behaviour towards friends, acquaintance slaves and servants. Rock Edict XII enumerates his catholic ideas and pleads for toleration among the various sects. Rock Edict XIII gives the most important and novel idea of Asoka that the spiritual conquest is being better than the aggression and violence. In the separate Kalinga Edicts, Asoka commands to his administrative officials to treat his subjects as his children, "All men are my children".

The main characteristic of Asoka's Dhamma was emphasis on ethical ideas. He laid emphasis on the purity and strength of character and soul. Secondly, *Ahimsa* or non-violence was one of the most important characteristics of his Dhamma. Third important characteristic was religious toleration and catholicity, the fourth being universalism, without any limitations or in other words the essence (*Sara*) of all religions.

Measures for the Spread and Propagation of Dhamma

According to the Mahavamsa, the **Third Buddhist council** met in his 17th regnal year at Pataliputra. It was presided over by the monk Mogaliputta Tissa. The purpose for organising the Buddhist council was to secure unanimity among various sects and to prevent schism within the Buddhist church. He wanted to save the principles of Buddhism from interpolation by making a compilation of true Buddhist doctrines. It was the final attempt of the Theravada school, a more sectarian school to exclude both dissidents and innovators from Buddhist order. The council deputed missionaries to various regions to propagate Buddhism.

Asoka introduced the system of **quinquennial and triennial tours** (*Anusamyana*) by leading officials throughout the jurisdiction of their territory for proclaiming Dhamma as well as for general supervision of the administration.

In the fourteenth year of his reign he created the new **post of *Dharma Mahamatra***. These officials were charged with the duty of inculcating Dhamma among the people of all sects including Brahmanas, the Nigranthas and the Jainas. They were also asked to supervise the spread and propagation of Dhamma in and outside his empire. Asoka felt that the spread of Dhamma was the panacea of all ills and that Dhamma can be disseminated well by persuasion than by regulation. Hence the *Dharma Mahamatras* were specially entrusted with the work of '*Dhammadhi Thana*' and '*Dhamma Vadhi*' i.e. the establishment and increase of piety.

While the officers were busy in preaching the Dhamma, the emperor himself did not remain idle. In the eleventh year of his reign he started **religious tours** (*Dhamma Yatra*) as against the pleasure trips (*Vihar Yatra*) of the emperors. The purposes of these tours were to encourage religious propagation. During the tours he visited Sramanas and Brahmanas with open mind and with liberality to one and all. He also visited elders, people in rural areas (*Janapadas*) etc. He visited the places specially associated with Buddhism and popularised them. The memories of his pious visits are recorded in the Rumenidei and Nigali Sagar Inscriptions.

Asoka was the first ruler of Indian history who sent missionaries to propagate instructions of Dhamma both in and outside India. The Third Buddhist Council directed missionaries to various countries. Asoka's son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitra were sent as missionaries to Sri Lanka (Kambapani). The fact admits no doubt that Buddhism during the lifetime of Buddha was restricted to north India only. But due to the missionary activities of Asoka Buddhism not only became an All India religion but also became more popular outside India. It even became the official religion of China, Japan and many other countries. Today Buddhism is almost nonexistent in India but it forms a major religion in China, Japan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand.

The names of the missionaries and the countries to which they were sent as preserved in the caskets from the Stupa of Sanchi are as follows

Majjhantika	Kashmir and Gandhara
Mahadeva	Mysore
Rakkhita	Varanasi
Yona Dhammarakkhita	Northern Maharashtra
Mahadhammarakkhita	Marattha
Maharakkhita	Yona (Greece)
Majjhima	Himalayan region
Sona and Uttara	Suvarnabhumi (Burma)
Mahendra, Sanghamitra	Sri Lanka (Tambapani)
Rishtriya	Sri Lanka (Tambapani)
Uttriya, Sambala, Bhadra etc	Sri Lanka (Tambapani)

A spurious tradition claims that 17 Buddhist missionaries were sent to the capital of China. The fresco paintings of Ajanta confirm the journey of Mahendra and Sanghamitra to Sri Lanka. Asoka sent his **Ambassadors of peace** to the courts of his contemporary kings in the west. These Ambassadors were naturally instructed to perform the duty of the missionaries. He sent missionary Ambassadors to the courts of Antiochus II Theos of Syria, Ptolemy Philadelphos of Egypt, Antigonos Gonatas of Macedonia, Magas of Cyrene and Alexander of Epirus. These emissaries carried his massages of peace and non-violence and measures for the relief of suffering humanity.

Asoka was the first ruler to make the principles of Buddhism available to the people through his Inscriptions (*Dharmastambhas*). He issued a large number of ***Dharmastambhas*** spreading over entire India recording the principles of Buddhism. These inscriptions were in the popular Pali language and Brahmi script for which it was within the reach of the common people. These inscriptions were meant to guide the people towards a better life.

According to R.K. Mukherji " He was instrumental in bringing the moral ascendancy of Indian culture over a large part of the civilised world." R.C. Majumdar says, " Three continents drank the nectar of bliss and the time not far distant when the name of Buddha would be daily uttered in one-third of the entire world." It is said if Buddha was the cloud, Asoka was the rain.

PLACE IN HISTORY

Asoka ranks among the greatest kings of the world history and is known as **Asoka the great**. He appears to many people in many guises, a conqueror that forsook conquest when he saw the sufferings it caused, a political genius, a saint, a monk and a monarch and a ruler with a rare understanding of human beings. "He had the energy of a Chandragupta, the versatility of a Samudragupta and the catholicity of an Akbar". He considered the spiritual and material welfare of his subjects as his chief mission in life and looked up on them as his children. As a warrior he is comparable to Alexander, Napoleon, Hitler and Mussolini but none of them was able to establish lasting peace. He was a military general who combined the capacity to argue points of doctrine with erudite monks. He was the only ruler in the history of the world who initiated the process of spiritual victory (*Dharmavijaya*) or victory over kingdoms without actual war. If he steered his army into a war that involved the death of hundreds of thousands of men he also sent missionaries to propagate the message of nonviolence in three continents. His message was one of peace on earth and good will among men.

As a religious preacher he preached the virtues of concord. He undertook strenuous trips to the sacred places of Buddhism but bore no ill will towards any other religion, Hinduism or Jainism. Although he propagated Buddhism in three continents he never made it his state religion. He allowed everyone to practice the religion, one liked. He presented before the world a set of moral principles, which was not a religion by itself but an essence of all religions with a practical and pragmatic approach. He inculcated the true meaning of Dhamma - man's responsibility towards his fellow human beings.

"The edicts reveal Asoka as a man who sought to combine the piety of the monk with the wisdom of the king and to make India the kingdom of righteousness as he conceived it, a theocracy without a god, in which the government should act the part providence and guide the people in right way".

Asoka was a great patron of Art and Architecture. During his reigns a number of Pillars and Rock Edicts were engraved, a number of Stupas and Viharas were constructed. The Pillars of the period were so lively that the four lions of the Sarnath Pillar have been adopted as the national emblem of the Republic of India.

He was a rare combination of the monk and the monarch. He himself gave up eating meat and asked his people to do so. His pleasure trips (*Vihar Yatra*) were converted to pilgrimages (*Dhamma Yatra*). He himself set examples and asked people to follow him.

He has often been compared with other distinguished monarchs of history, eastern and western, modern or ancient but has come out greater than all of them by any test. He was greater than J**ulius Caesar** for his welfare activities as Caesar during his hay days was feasting and frolicking in Egypt with Cleopetra. As a missionary he has been compared with the **Roman Emperor Constantine**, the great who patronised Christianity as Asoka patronised Buddhism. But Constantine patronised Christianity when it was already a sweeping force. Asoka patronised Buddhism, which was till then a local religion restricted to north India. Asoka is compared with Charlemagne for the patronage of religion. But **Charlemagne** made Christianity the state religion, which Asoka didn't.

The reign of Asoka saw the final triumph of the centripetal forces. With the conquest of Kalinga the unification of India was nearly completed. The dream of a united Jambudwipa was realised. He ruled over an empire greater than the British India as the British India did not consist of the northwestern kingdom upto Persia.

The Mauryan Emprie reached its highest watermark duing the reign of Asoka. His reign forms the brightest chapter of Indian History. H.G. Wells says ; "Amidst the tens and thousands of names of the monarchs that crowd the columns of history...... the name of Asoka shines and shines almost like a star".

DECLINE AND FALL OF THE MAURYAN EMPIRE

Chandragupta Maurya established the Mauryan dynasty circa 322 B.C. Asoka as the greatest king of the dynasty contributed the most towards its allround progress. Within about fifty years after the death of Asoka (in 232 B.C.) the great Mauryan Empire that had reached the status of the greatest Indian empire, started to crumble. The Mauryan Empire with its unique character and greatness was a miracle and miracles don't last long. Various causes have been assigned for its downfall.

Natural Decay

Everything that has a beginning has an end. Birth, growth and decay are the three stages of every empire. Empires that are born are destined to die natural death within a definite time frame, as nothing is permanent in this world. Hence, it is no wonder that the Mauryan Empire also met its decay.

Weak Successors

The successors of Asoka proved unequal for the task of maintaining the vast empire of Chandragupta Maurya and Asoka. The first three Mauryan emperors were men of exceptional abilities. No dynasty can produce such capable rulers uninterruptedly. It is said that a progeny of pigmies whose 'shoulders were not fit to bear the weight of his mighty monarchy' succeeded Asoka. Brihadratha, the last ruler of the imperial Mauryas was crushed by his own general, Pushyamitra Sunga, who established the Sunga Dynasty.

It has been rightly said that, Asoka's scepter was like the bow of Ulysses which could not be drawn by weaker hands. The pattern of Asoka's policy was not a conventional one. The new imperialism naturally created problems for his successors. Hence the process of disintegration was accelerated.

Partition of Empire

The Empire of Asoka was partitioned into atleast two parts immediately after his death. According to Rajatarangini, Jalauka succeeded Asoka as the ruler of western part including Kashmir and according to Vayu Purana; Kunala succeeded Asoka in the eastern part of the empire. The division of the empire into two parts naturally weakened the foundation. The post-Asokan period was marked by a scramble for power among the Mauryan princes. Some of the princes were encouraged to assume independence. We get reference to the name of Virasena a Mauryan prince who became an independent ruler of Gandhara. Subhagasena was another Mauryan prince who declared independence.

Mauryan Administration

The Mauryan administration from the days of Chandragupta Maurya was extremely centralised. All the important functions as far as possible were under the direct control of the ruler. This, in itself required a king of considerable personal ability. The officials of the administration owed their loyalty to the king not to the state. Hence with the division of the empire into many parts an administrative imbalance was created which weakened the empire. The provincial rulers failed to win over the loyalty of the bureaucracy. For weak rulers, a centralised bureaucracy was a burden. Consequently the administrative machinery deteriorated.

Vastness of the Empire

The empire of Chandragupta Maurya and Asoka was too vast to remain under one administration for a long time. The empire had no geographical homogeneity. Its political unity was due to a militarily powerful ruler at the centre with efficient administration. Chandragupta conquered a large number of small kingdoms from northeast to peninsular India and Asoka completed the process by conquering Kalinga. Hence, it was only a matter of time when these small kingdoms would revolt against their conquerors. The moment the centre becomes weak they were sure to grab the opportunity. As a matter of fact immediately after the death of Asoka many small kingdoms became independent.

A vast empire like the Mauryan Empire, served by primitive means of communication was bound to face problems of unity. But for the benevolent rule, Asoka himself would have faced the same problem during his lifetime.

Foreign Invasion

Alexander set the trend of Greek invasion of India. Chandragupta Maurya drove away the Greeks from India by defeating Seleucus Nikator. The Greek powers remained under the Mauryan authority during the period of Bindusara and Asoka. With the decline of the Mauryan authority once again the Greeks started to invade India. The Greek writer Polybius refers to the invasion of Antiochos, the great about 206 B.C. who crossed sword with Subhagaseną, the Mauryan ruler in he northwest region. He was followed by a number of Greek invaders. The Gargi Samhita mentions that Greeks entered deep into India as far as Mathura and Oudh. Hence, these Greek invasions must have weakened the Mauryan Empire. The lack of political unity in the post Asokan period weakened the resistance against the Greeks. So much so it became resistance of the local rulers who tried to defend their newly acquired independence.

Internal Revolution

A later work, Divyavadana refers to revolts in the Mauryan provinces against the oppression of the officials (*Dushta Amatyas*). We come across such a revolt even during the time of Bindusara at Taxila. Asoka who was then the Viceroy of Ujjain was sent to Taxila to suppress the revolution of the citizens of Taxila (*Pauras*). The citizens made it very clear before Asoka that they were not opposed to the prince, nor to the king Bindusara, but they were against the wicked ministers. Even during the reign of Asoka, the people of Taxila revolted against the tyranny of the ministers and the crown prince Kunala was sent to suppress it. Asoka took note of the official maladministration and in his Kalinga Edicts has given clear instruction to his ministers (*Mahamatras*) how to deal with his subjects saying that all men were his children. The loyalty of the citizens was gradually fading away due to ministerial oppression. Hence, one after another the provinces broke away from the centre. The successors of Asoka had neither the strength nor the will to arrest the process of disintegration.

Growth of Urbanization

The citizens of the Mauryan Empire were not at a uniform level of cultural development. The economic prosperity of the empire led to the growth of some highly developed cities and trade centres. These urban centres widely differed from the rural areas in cultural and economic standards. The rural areas remained mostly neglected. This inequality encouraged the forces of disintegration after Asoka.

Economic Inequality

The Gangetic Valley, which was the heartland of the Mauryan Empire, was well developed and prosperous. In comparison, the Deccan kingdoms were economically backward. The Mauryan rulers did not make any considerable effort to promote the economic condition of south India. Hence this economic disparity had its impact on the unity of the nation. As long as the centre was strong the nation was one. Once the centre became weak the disgruntled elements tried to break away.

Bureaucratic Failure

The Mauryan Bureaucracy was carefully recruited from among the privileged groups. They formed a closed community. Megasthenes describes the administrators as forming two out of the seven classes of society. As a whole they became detached from the society and enjoyed special prestige and privileges. Chandragupta, Bindusara and Asoka not only personally selected them but also always kept a close watch on them through an effective system of spying. The spies had access to the king at any time of the day even to the bedrooms. But with a weak ruler the control collapsed and the officers naturally became autocratic leading to the dissatisfaction of the masses.

Financial Problems

Asokavadana narrates that towards the end of his reign Asoka had depleted the state treasury with his generous gifts to the Buddhist community (Sangha) and by his missionary activities. Inspite of the advice of his ministers he continued to spend lavishly on religious works. The kingdom was plagued by serious financial difficulties. His ministers and his crown prince not only objected to it and even started to defy his orders to save the kingdom. Some scholars argue that the position was not that bad, as it has been described to illustrate the greatness of Buddhism.

Responsibility of Asoka and the Brahmanical Reaction

According to Mahamohopadhyaya Pandit Haraprasad Sastri a reaction promoted by the Brahmins weakened the foundation of the Mauryan Empire leading to its ultimate collapse few decades after Asoka. According to Pandit H.P, Sastri some of the policies adopted by Asoka alienated the Brahmins who took up the cause and gave leadership to the resistance against the Mauryas. It was a sort of reaction of Hinduism against Buddhism.

One of the causes for the alienation of the Brahmins was the Asokan Edict against the animal sacrifice. According to Pandit Sastri it was directly aimed against the Brahmins, which effected their importance and income. By their control over the knowledge of performing sacrifices the Brahmins claimed superior status in the society and earned their living. They were aggrieved more because a Sudra promulgated the ban. H.C. Raychaudhury while opposing this view of Pandit Sastri says that first of all Asoka was not a Sudra. The Puranic statement, to which Pandit Sastri refers, says that the rulers of India after Mahapadma Nanda shall be Sudras. But the statement refers only to the successors of Mahapadma Nanda of Nanda dynasty, as he was a Sudra. It has no relevance to the dynasties after the Nandas. Raychoudhury therefore says that in the light of this Puranic statement if Mauryas shall be taken as Sudras then the Sungas and Kanvas shall also be Sudras, which they were not. The Mauryas were Kshatriyas. Secondly so far as the ban on animal sacrifice was concerned the Hindu scriptures itself preach non-violence (*Ahimsa*). Hence there was no wrong for Asoka in doing so – *Jibedaya*, kindness to animals. On the contrary in one Edict Asoka states that no animal was to be sacrificed at places where edicts have been inscribed.

Pandit Sastri further argues that in the Minor Rock Edict at Brahmagiri, Asoka boasts that he had reduced those who were regarded as Gods on earth into false Gods. Pandit Sastri says that the Brahmins were considered as *Bhudevas* or Gods on earth and that the inscription directly ridiculed them. But Raychoudhury refutes the statement as a wrong reading of the inscription. According to Raychoudhury the exact reading shall be that during that time those who were unassociated with God became associated with them through his efforts.

Pundit Sastri further argues that the introduction of *Vyavahara Samata* and *Danda Samata*, the uniformity of legal procedure and punishment, by Asoka reduced the privileges of the Brahmins by reducing them to the level of equality where as they used to enjoy many privileges including immunity form capital punishment. According to H.C. Raychoudhury words like *Danda Samata* and *Vyavahara Samata* should not be considered as isolated expressions. These were not aimed against the Brahmins. Asoka started a set of law codes. He decentralised the judicial authority and empowered the *Rajukas* in the Provinces to exercise some authority. In this context he announced *Danda Samata* and *Vyavahara Samata* as uniformity of judicial procedure and uniformity of penalties from place to place without any autonomy to any single official. Besides, Raychoudhury also questions the idea of immunity of Brahmins from capital punishment. The Arthasastra, the Mahabharat, the Artreya Brahmana etc are full of references of guilty Brahmins being given capital punishment.

Pundit Sastri says that the appointment of Dharma Mahamatras by Asoka amounted to a direct invasion on the rights and privileges of the Brahmanas. H.C. Raychoudhury says that the *Dharma Mahamatras* were concerned with the social welfare. Their duties consisted of the establishment of law of piety and the law of piety included liberality to Brahmanas. Asoka himself met the Brahmanas during his tours. However, it is quite probable that in due course the *Dharma Mahamatras* might have become unpopular with the people. Since Asoka paid importance to them they must have misused their authority and nearness to the king.

Pandit Sastri goes on to give his final argument, which according to Romila Thapar is "even weaker than his previous ones". He says that because of the patronage of Buddhism by Asoka the Hindus represented by the Brahmins became soar with him. Since Asoka was quite strong they could not harm him, but on his death the conflict surfaced. In this connection Pandit Sastri projects the assassination of Brihadratha, the last Mauryan ruler by Pushyamitra Sunga, a Brahmin as the climax of Brahmanical reaction against the Mauryas. H.C. Raychoudhury contradicts the point by saying that there was no proof of Pushyamitra being the leader of the Brahmins. On the contrary according to Rajatarangini one of Asoka's descendants was quite an anti-Buddhist and a pro-Brahmin. Jalauka is described as a Saiva. Further if there was an ill feeling between the Mauryas and the Brahmins then how could a Brahmin, Pushyamitra Sunga be appointed as the commander-in-chief of the Mauryan army by Brihadratha? Brahmin writers like Kalhana and Bana are full of praise for Asoka. Rather Bana calls Pushyamitra as *Anarya* (ignoble) for killing Brihadratha.

There is little to suggest that Brahmins were special victims of Mauryan tyranny. On the contrary, Asoka has shown special favour towards the Brahmins and his successors have appointed them into high offices. Hence, there is no strength in the argument of Pandit Sastri.

In conclusion it can be said that Asoka's pro-Buddhist feelings were bound to evoke criticism on the part of the other religions. Brahmins being the elite might have taken the lead in the move against Asoka. As stated above towards the end even some of his ministers and his crown prince opposed his actions.

The Pacifist Policy of Asoka has been held as being responsible for producing weak successors and for undermining the strength of his army. As an emperor he did not provide proper training to his sons. Instead of being trained in the art of administration and warfare his son Mahendra was sent as a missionary to propagate Buddhism in Sri Lanka. His renunciation of war after the Kalinga war weakened the Mauryan army. His last war was in 261 B.C. For nearly 30 years he did not fight a war and depended on spiritual victory. Hence, army was bound to become weak. Besides, for his policy of non-violence he must have reduced expenditure on army. The horrors of the Kalinga war were fresh in the minds of the people for which Asoka could escape without resistance. But his death was followed by a number of internal rebellions and foreign invasions. The Mauryan army had become spineless. His successors were brought up on a pacifist diet to such an extent that they were unable to organise a strong army. Hence, the Mauryan dynasty came to an end by a military coup by Pushyamitra Sunga who started the Sunga dynasty.

The arguments stated above may be true or false but the responsibility of Asoka towards the downfall of the empire cannot be denied. B.M. Barua has rightly said that when a building collapses the main pillar of support contributes the most. No doubt Asoka, the great, was the greatest of the Mauryas. Hence, his policies must have contributed in more ways than one for the downfall too. If he was responsible for making the Mauryan Empire the greatest in India he was also equally responsible for its decline. According to H.C. Raychoudhury: "India needed men of caliber of Porus and Chandragupta to ensure her protection, but she got a dreamer".

Chapter - 6

THE KUSHANAS

After the decline of the Mauryas many foreign invaders entered into the Indian soil due to the lack a paramount power. The Indo-Greeks, the Indo-Bactrians, the Sakas, the Parthians etc. not only invaded India but also often fought against each other. During the early part of the first century AD a new wave of invaders was on its way from central Asia. The Kushanas as the new invaders on the Indian soil ultimately established a vast empire in the heart of India. The Kushana rule marked the climax of foreign invasion. They defeated all other foreign invaders and established a stable rule. They initiated a close relationship between central Asia and northwestern India and broke the isolated character of Indian administration. They were the harbingers of a composite civilization and have left permanent footprints in the pages of Indian history. The Kushana rule opened new routes of trade between India and central Asia. They were responsible for the spread of Buddhism in central Asia and other places. They established close commercial and cultural link between India and Rome.

SOURCES

There are literary, epigraphic, numismatic and archaeological sources for the study of the Kushanas. However, information from many of the sources is not accurate and is subject to conflicting interpretations.

Literary

The most significant literary sources are the Chinese records like the Annals of the Early Han dynasty by Pan-ku, the Annals of the later Han dynasty by Fan-Ye and the Chinese chronicle Mat-twan Lin. Besides, there is the Sie-Chi by Ssu-Ma-Chien. Among the Indian literatures on the Kushanas, mention may be made of Kalhana's Rajatarangini, Kumaralata's Kalpanamandika, Asvaghasha's Buddhacharita, Nagarjuna's Madhyamika Sutra and other Buddhist works. The Greek writers like Strabo and Justin also refer to the Yueh-chis.

Epigraphy

The Panjtir Inscription, the Peshawar Casket Inscription, the Takht-i-bahi Inscription, Taxila Silver Scroll Inscription etc. throw welcome light on the Kushana history. The Dust-e-Nabur Inscription at Afghanistan also contains information on the Kushana age. The Kama Inscription of Kanishka contains information on the ancestry of Kanishka. Besides these, the inscriptions of Kanishka found at Kausambi, Sarnath, Sravasti, Mathura, Suivihar etc. provide information on the extent of his empire and conquests.

Numismatics

The numismatic evidence forms the main source on information of the Kushana history. A large number of gold, silver, copper and bronze coins issued by the

Kushana kings help us in determining their chronology, extent of empire, religious belief, trade and commerce, economic prosperity etc.

Archaeological Remains

The sculptural relics and architectural remains are valuable sources of information about the period. The remains of the monastery at Purushapura (Peshwar), the Stupas, the Chaityas, the art and sculpture at Mathura provide us knowledge about the religion and art of the period.

ORIGIN AND ORIGINAL HOME

The Kushanas were a branch of a nomadic people called the Yueh-chi tribe. The Yueh-chi tribe originally lived in the northwestern China. By about 165 B.C. the Yueh-chis were defeated and driven out of their homeland by a neighbouring tribe Hiung-nu (Huns). The Yueh-chis moved westward. A small section of the Yueh-chis known as little Yueh-chi (Sao Yueh-chi) moved towards south and settled on the Tibetan borders. The main branch known as Ta- Yueh-chi or Great Yueh-chi moved westward. On the way they came in conflict with a horde known as Wu-sun and defeated them. Thereafter they defeated the Sakas and occupied the valley of Ili and Syr Darya. But in spite of their success, it was at this place that for the second time they were defeated and driven away by the Hunas. They moved further west into the Ta-hiah (Bactria) territory in the Oxus or Amu Darya valley. They found this region as a safe home and settled there putting an end to their nomadic life and took up agriculture.

It was at this place that they were divided into five clans such as Hieu-ni, Chouang-mo, Kao-ei-choung

(Kushana), Hi-thun and Kao-fu. There was no institution of kingship among them. A Yavuga or Chief headed each clan. One of these Chiefs, Kujala Kadphises of the Kushana clan in due course of time defeated all the other clans and established a unified centralised government. He assumed the title of king (Wang) and established his capital in the modern Bokhara region (ancient Sogdiana). With this, the process of transition from tribal settlement to the formation of state took place.

KUJALA KADPHISES OR KADPHISES I

K'ieou-tsieou-k'io or Kujala Kadphises of Kushana tribe made himself supreme over all the four other tribes and established an empire. He is the first historical figure of the Kushanas. Information about him is available from the numismatic sources. There is a good deal of controversy about his date. Professor Sten Konow on the basis of the Takht-i-Bahi Inscription opines that Kadphises I came to power after 45 AD. Professor Rapson, however, gives the view that Sten Konow's reading of the inscription is wrong. D.C. Sircar is of the view that Kadphises I ruled from 15 A.D. to 65 A.D.

On the basis of some coins it is believed that he was a contemporary or an associate of Hermaues, the last Greek Prince of the Kabul valley. One of his coins mentions the name of Hermaues on one side in Greek language and his own name in Kharosthi on the other, with the legend *Kujala-kasasa-Kushana-Yavugasa Sacha Dhrama-thita* meaning Kujala Kasa, the Kushana chief established in Dharma, the religions of truth. The legend omits all royal titles, which appear in his later coins, meaning that probably he was a vassal of the Greek king Hermaues initially. Probably with his help he subdued different branches of Yueh-chis and established himself as the sovereign ruler. His later coins give him the imperial titles like '*Maharajasa Mahatasa Kushana - Kujula-Kaphasa*' (Great king of kings). His coins bearing the Roman head copied from the coins of Augustus, Tiberius or Claudius, give information about his date. Probably he issued only copper coins but not gold coins. On the basis of his coins it is concluded that he conquered Kabul from the Parthians and thereafter added Kandahar. His son Weima Kadphises probably conquered Gandhara and Taxila during his lifetime.

WEIMA KADPHISES OR KADPHISES II

Kadphises I was succeeded by his son Yen-kao-tchen identified as Weima Kadphises. According to D.C. Sircar, Weima (Vima) Kadphises ruled from 65 A.D. to 75 A.D.

He was the first of the Kushanas to have conquered India proper upto Mathura region. His coins are found all over north India. V.A. Smith says that the dominion of Kadphises II extended upto the Ganges, probably upto Varanasi. Parthia was his western frontier. His empire included Afghanistan, Afghan Turkistan, Bukhara, and parts of Russian Turkistan. He ruled his Indian provinces through military governors known as Mahasenapatis.

He issued gold and copper coins with the titles of *Maharaja*, *Rajatiraja* (king of kings), *Sarvalokesvara* (lord of all spheres), and *Mahiswara* (lord of earth). These titles prove that he was the real founder of the Kushana Empire in India. Marshal and Sten Konow suggest that Weima Kadphises ascended the throne in 78 A.D. and introduced the Saka Era on the date of his accession. There is however, no evidence that he started the Saka Era, as nowhere he has referred to a date, which can be taken as an era.

His coins both gold and copper depict him as a follower of Hinduism. The figures of Lord Siva with two arms holding a long trident accompanied by a bull, seated on a couch or standing before a sacrificial altar or even riding a chariot occupy his coins. His own life-like representation on the obverse in various forms, project him as a worshipper of Siva. The use of the legend *Mahiswara* has been often taken to be *Maheswara*, the devotee of Siva.

Abundance of gold and copper coins issued by Weima Kadphises indicates the prosperity of the period. During his time, a brisk trade in silk, spices, gems and other articles was carried on between India, China and the Roman Empire. Pliny refers to the flourishing trade between India and the Roman Empire in the first century A.D.

KANISHKA

Kanishka was the greatest of the Kushana rulers. A great conqueror and a patron of Buddhism, he combined in himself the military ability of Chandragupta Maurya and the religious zeal of Asoka. Our knowledge of Kanishka is however meager and subject to interpretations.

Generally Kanishka is regarded as the successor of Weima Kadphises. But there are many other viewpoints in this regard. First of all, the relationship between Kanishka and Weima Kadphises is not known. Secondly there seems to be a small gap between the two rulers. It was not a mere take over. It is also very difficult to determine the exact date of his accession to the throne though tentatively it has been placed in the later part of 78 A.D.

Relation with the Kadphises group

It was believed for a longtime that the rule of the Kadphises group of Kushana rulers ended with Weima Kadphises and that Kanishka started a different line of Kushana rulers unconnected to the earlier line. This controversy has been set to rest with the discovery of the Kamra Inscription of Kanishka Kushana. In the Inscription Vashiska, the successor of Kanishka claims his descent from Kujala Kadphises. The Mot Inscription found near Mathura bears the statue of Weima Kadphises with the description of Devakula and Kanishka also belonged to the Devakula. Another inscription at Mathura describes Weima Kadphises as the ancestor of Hubishka who was a direct descendant of Kanishka. Hence the fact admits no doubt that Kanishka had blood relation with the Kadphises group of rulers although he did not use the title of Kadphises. The term Kadphises was not a family surname but a title meaning 'an honourable person'. For some unknown reason Kanishka did not use the title. The coins of both Kanishka and Weima Kadphises have been found together at several places and have many similarities in size and weight.

A group of scholars hold the view that Kanishka ruled concurrently with the Kadphises rulers. The fact that Kanishka started a new Era, i.e. the Saka Era in 78 A.D. makes some scholars believe that he did not belong to the Kadphises group of rulers. The earliest reference of Kanishka is found at Sarnath in Uttar Pradesh where he was probably a Governor under Weima Kadphises. After the death of Weima in the struggle for power Kanishka came out successful for which there was a small gap between the two rulers. In the two inscriptions of the 2nd and 3rd years of his reign which have been found at Kausambi and Sarnath respectively he merely calls himself as Maharaja Kanishka. In the inscriptions belonging to 7th and 11th years of his reign he gives his titles as *Maharaja Rajatiraja Devaputrasuhi.* All these indicate that Kanishka started as a Viceroy in north India and later shifted to Western India, acquired a vast empire, started a new Era and adopted the title of Rajadhiraja.

DATE OF ACCESSION

The date of accession of Kanishka is one of the perplexing problems of history. Paucity of materials makes scholars argue in their own way. As a result, a number of dates such as 58 B.C., 78 A.D., 128 A.D., 144 A.D., 228 A.D. and even 275 A.D. have been suggested. However, it is generally agreed that Kanishka ascended the throne in 78 A.D. and started the Saka Era since then. Scholars like Thomas, Oldenberg, Rapson, Ferguson, Banerjee and Raychoudhury support this date. The fact admits no doubt that Kanishka founded an Era as the reign of Kanishka and that of his successors have been dated in regnal years counted from the year I of his reign. Scholars like Dr. Fleet argue that the Era started by Kanishka was the Vikram Samvat Era of 58 B.C. not the Saka Era. This view however has been long negated.

SAKA ERA

It may be borne in mind that the Saka Era started by Kanishka commencing from 78 A.D. continues to be counted even today in the official records of the Government of India as *Sakabda*. This is a major contribution of Kanishka to the Indian history. Hence, now the question comes as to why an Era started by Kanishka of Kushana dynasty has been named as the Saka Era. Definitely Kanishka did not belong to the Sakas who had come to India as invaders and had settled in western India. Various reasons have been ascribed for this. First of all, the Kushanas being foreign invaders to the Indian soil were possibly held or confused as Sakas in course of time. Secondly, the Saka Kshatrapas of western India who were for some time feudatories of Kanishka continuously used the Era even after the decline of Kushana Power in India. As a matter of fact the continuity of Saka Era up to the modern times is mainly due to its use by the Sakas of western India. Ujjain was a great center of astronomical studies. Probably because of the use of the Era by the Sakas for a very long time in and around Ujjain the Era entered in to history and continues till today.

MILITARY ACHIEVEMENTS

Kanishka was a great warrior. He inherited a vast empire, which included central Asia, Afghanistan and northwest India and as an imperialist he extended his empire in all directions.

Kashmir

Kanishka annexed Kashmir. Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* mentions Kanishka as one of the rulers of Kashmir. The natural beauty of the valley attracted him. He founded the city of Kanishkapura in Kashmir. The village of Kanispor now represents the city. He built a number of Buddhist monasteries in Kashmir. However, the details of the conquest are not known. From Si-Yu-Ki of Hiuen Tsang it is known that Kashmir formed a part of his kingdom.

Magadha

From the Buddhist sources it is learnt that Kanishka conquered a large portion of the Magadhan Empire. He waged a successful war against the capital city Pataliputra. Traditionally it is believed that after conquering Pataliputra he took away the Buddhist scholar Aswaghosha with him who later became the Vice-President of the fourth Buddhist council convened by him. His conquests extended up to the Far Eastern India, which included parts of Bengal. The large-scale discovery of Kushana coins at Tamluk, Malda, Murshidabad etc. strengthen the theory of inclusion of Bengal within Kanishka's kingdom.

Western India

Kanishka waged a successful war against the Saka Kshatrapas of Western India. He defeated the Saka ruler Chashtan of Ujjain. The discovery of Kushana coins around Ujjain proves this point. He defeated Bhumaka and his successor Nahapana who ruled over Gujrat and Saurashtra region. All of them became feudatories of Kanishka and used the Saka Era. Their coins also bear the imprint of the name of Kanishka.

China

One of the most important events of the reign of Kanishka was his war against China. He conquered the Chinese territory of Yarkand, Khatan and Kashgar. The powerful Chinese General, Pan Chao on the orders of Ho-ti (89-105 A.D.) the Chinese Emperor tried to conquer the kingdom to the Northeast of Pamirs. Kanishka decided to check the Chinese aggressions. First of all he stopped the tribute, which Weima Kadphises used to pay to the Chinese Emperor. In order to prove his equality with the rulers of the Han dynasty of China who claimed heavenly origin he adopted the title *Devaputra* (Son of God). Not only this, he also sent a proposal through his envoy to marry the Chinese princes. The steps taken by Kanishka irritated Pan Chao, the Chinese General. Out of anger he arrested the envoy of Kanishka. As a result, a fierce battle took place between the two. But unfortunately, Kanishka was defeated and was compelled to resume the payment of annual tribute. After the death of Pan Chao, his son Pan-Chi-Yang became the General of the Chinese army. Kanishka led a second expedition against China. This time he defeated the Chinese army and occupied Yarkand, Khotan and Kashgar.

Parthia and Rome

According to the Chinese sources Kanishka waged an aggressive war against the Parthian king Pakoras-II and defeated him. His hostility with Parthia earned him the friendship of the Roman emperor, Trajan. Since the Romans and the Parthians were continuously hostile to each other Kanishka maintained friendly relation with Rome. He sent an ambassador to the Roman emperor, Trajan in 99 A.D.

EXTENT OF EMPIRE

Kanishka acquired a vast empire. The find-spots of his inscriptions, the availability of his coins and the literary records suggest the extent of his empire.

From the epigraphic records it is derived that he ruled over Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, northwestern frontier province and a part of Sindh. The Peshwar Casket Inscription, Suivihar and Jeda inscriptions give information about his control over western India, Punjab, northern Sindh and Gandhara. His inscriptions at Sarnath, Sravasti and Mathura testify to his control over Uttar Pradesh. One of his inscriptions has been found at Benaras. Inscriptions at Malwa belonging to his immediate successor suggest his control over Malwa.

The literary works like the Rajatarangini of Kalhana, Si-Yu-Ki of Hiuen Tsang and the writings of Alberuni provide information about the extent of his empire. Alberuni refers to a tradition that suggests Kanishka's rule over Afghanistan and central Asia. Hiuen Tsang mentions the inclusion of Gandhara, Peshwar and the Chinese provinces in his empire.

The large-scale availability of his coins in eastern India and western India prove the fact that these were included in his empire.

Kanishka's Indian empire extended from Kashmir and Indus Valley in the north, to Bengal in the east and Malwa in the west. The Vindhya Mountains formed his southern boundary. Beyond India his empire included the territories conquered from the Chinese emperor in the Trans-Pamir region, the Oxus Valley (Bactria) and the land between Hindukush and Indus like Kabul, Ghazni, Kandahar, Seistan and Beluchistan.

The capital of the empire was located at Purushapura (Peshwar). The city was a beautiful city with many Buddhist monasteries inside. He erected a great relic tower, which seems to have deserved to rank among the wonders of the world. The super structure of carved wood was 400 feet high with thirteen stories and was surrounded by a mighty iron pinnacle.

ADMINISTRATION

Very scanty information is available about Kanishka's administration. The vastness of his empire speaks for itself that he must have been an administrative genius. Not only that he was a great conqueror but also was a patron of religion and literature. A positive personality like Kanishka ought to have a well-knit administrative system.

His administration was fundamentally based on Mauryan pattern. He believed in the Divine Right of kingship and adopted the title of *Daivaputra* "son of God". His warlike qualities indicate that he must have ruled as an autocrat. Along with the Divine Right theory and autocracy, his patronage of Buddhism, art, architecture and literature project him as a benevolent ruler. His autocracy was benevolent autocracy.

For administrative convenience he divided his empire into several administrative units such as *Rashtra, Ahara, Janapada, Desha* or *Vishaya, Grama* etc. From the Sarnath Inscription and the writings in his coins it is known that the empire was divided into provinces or *Satrapies*. He appointed Satrapas or Kshatrapas (Governors or Viceroys) who were in charge of the Satrapas. The Governors of bigger provinces were called as Mahakshatrapas. It was also a common practice of the Kushanas to appoint Crown Princes as co-rulers. Kanishka appointed Vashishka as his co-ruler. The Sarnath Inscription mentions the name of Kharapallana as a Mahakshatrapa who was in charge of the province of Mathura. His son Vanaspara was the Kshatrapa of Banaras. Dhanadeva was the *Kshatrapa* of Kausambi and Satyamitra was the Kshatrapa of Ayodhya. The name of Nahapana as the Kshatrapa of western India is a controversial point. The Kshatrapas enjoyed great deal of autonomy. But by and large they were under the suzerainty of Kanishka.

In the central administration a council of ministers or the Mantriparishad assisted Kanishka. His principal minister was Mathara (Ka-tchalo). The Gramika was the official of the village level. Navakarnika was an officer in-charge of the construction of the buildings. Dandanayakas were in-charge of law and order.

As a result of efficiency of administration there was no revolt in any part of his empire during his reign. After Asoka he was the first ruler to establish an atmosphere of peace and order throughout India.

LITERARY ACTIVITIES

Kanishka was a great patron of learning. Kanishka's reign can be regarded as the precursor to the Indian renaissance, which reached its climax during the Gupta age. Sanskrit was restored to its pristine glory, in the hands of a foreigner like Kanishka. A galaxy of scholars adorned his court. Eminent Buddhist scholars and philosopher like Aswaghosa, Parsva, Vasumitra, Nagarjuna and Sangharaksha received his patronage. The celebrated physician Charaka the author of Charakasamhita probably flourished in his court. Mathara, a statesman of unusual intelligence was his Chief Minister. Aswaghosha wrote Buddhacharita, Saundarananda Kavya, Sariputraprakarana, Vajrasuchi etc. Nagarjuna was an exponent of Mahayana philosophy. His work Pajna-Paramita-Sutra-Sastra describes the theory of relativity. A Greek engineer Agesilaus played a prominent role in the religious, literary, scientific, philosophical and artistic activities of his reign. Vasubandhu wrote Mahavibhasha Sutra.

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Kanishka was a great patron of art and architecture. He built a large number of Viharas and Stupas. Majestic edifices were built in cities like Mathura, Taxila and his capital city Purushapura. The wooden superstructure of the monastery built at Purushapura was fit to be considered as one of the wonders of the world.

Another significant feature of the reign of Kanishka was the development of Gandhara School of Art. It was an admixture of the Indian and Greek styles of sculpture. This brought a remarkable change in the field of sculpture. His own life-size statue showing him in standing position in military dress with Gilgit boots at Mat in Mathura is a part of this school. Unfortunately the statue has lost its head probably by vandalism. The inscription underneath connects it with Kanishka.

PATRONAGE OF BUDDHISM

According to tradition supported by epigraphic and numismatic evidences Kanishka was a Buddhist. During his reign his capital Purushapura with a grand monastery was known to have been a centre of Buddhist culture. He is said to have summoned the fourth Buddhist Council (Mahasangati) at Kundala Vanavihar in Kashmir, which was presided over by Vasumitra. Asvaghosha was its Vice-President. It is said that the Buddhist Council was convened by Kanishka to settle the disputes in the Buddhist doctrines. The discourses held at the council have been compiled in the form of a religious text known as Mahavibhasha, a monumental work on Buddhist philosophy. The council was able to settle the disputes among the various schools of thought. A new form of Buddhism, known as the Mahayanism was given shape here, with the earlier one being known as Hinayana. The Mahayana form of Buddhism supported the worship of the statue of Buddha. Since Kanishka patronised Mahayana Buddhism, number of statues of Buddha were built during the period.

Kanishka like Asoka also sent missionaries for the propagation of Buddhism inside and outside his empire. Since Mahayana form of Buddhism preached by Kanishka was simpler as compared to the rigid

Hinayana form very soon it became popular in central Asia, Tibet, China, Japan and entire north India.

Inspite of his professed attachment to Buddhism, Kanishka was catholic enough to respect various other religions. His coins bear the figures of Greek, Sumerian, Persian and Indian deities like Oesho (Siva), Oado (the Persian wind God), Athsho (the Persian fire God), Mioro (the Sun God) and Nana (the Sumerian mother goddess). However the foreign rulers on Indian soil including the Kushanas found Buddhism more acceptable than the orthodox Hinduism. Besides they had to adopt any one of the Indian religions for legitimatization of their rule in India.

For his patronage of Buddhism and religious catholicity Kanishka is considered as the second Asoka. He was a foreigner by birth but an Indian by choice. The Kushana period marked an important epoch in the Indian history. The political unity of India, which was lost after the Mauryas, was regained during his time. India established close contact with foreign countries like China and Rome. Brisk trade developed between India and Rome. The period was remarkable for developments in religion, literature and sculpture and especially for the rise of Mahayana Buddhism and Gandhara School of Art.

Chapter - 7

THE GUPTAS

Five centuries (Circa 200 B.C. to 300 A.D.) passed between the decline of the first great Indian empire of the Mauryas and the emergence of the great classical empire of the Guptas. This period has been often described as the dark period of Indian history. Except for the brief period of the reign of Kanishka there was no strong empire in India during this period. As such many foreign dynasties like the Huns, the Sakas, the Pallavas, the Greeks and the Kushanas, entered into India and ruled over different parts. Kanishka established a strong Indo-central-Asian empire and for a brief period brought political unity in north India. But after the fall of Kanishka India was again divided into many small kingdoms that constantly quarreled among themselves. During the Kushana period the political headquarters had shifted from Magadha to Purushapura, which was again restored by Chandragupta-I of Gupta dynasty. Although the period lacked the glamour of large empires yet during the period intensive economic and cultural contact between India and the countries of the west and southeast Asia developed. There developed an advanced system of administration, agriculture and industry. Trade and currency developed under foreign influence during the period.

It is said that history repeats itself. India during the early centuries of the Christian era passed through the same vicissitudes, which she experienced during 6th century B.C. In such a situation the necessity and opportunities for the establishment of a paramount power were quite obvious. In the 6th century B.C. Magadha took the lead and the process culminated in the establishment of the Mauryan Empire. Similarly, in 4th century A.D. history repeated itself and under the same circumstances, the same province produced the empire-building dynasty of the Guptas.

The Gupta age has been styled variously as the Golden Age, the Classical Age, the Age of Renaissance, the Age of Hindu revivalism etc. The Age has been compared with the Periclean Age of ancient Greece, the Augustan Era of ancient Rome and the Elizabethan and Victorian Ages of Britain. The Age is famous for prolonged political unity and cultural upheaval in India.

SOURCES

The sources for the study of the history of the Guptas may be divided into the following groups such as, **literary, epigraphic, numismatic and monuments.**

Literary

Among the literary sources the Puranas play a great role. The most important Puranas containing information on the Guptas are Vayu Purana, Matsya Purana, Vishnu Purana and Brahmanda Purana. These throw light on the genealogy, extent of empire, system of government etc. The other literary sources are the Dharmashastras like Naradasmriti, Brihaspasmriti and Kamandaka's Nitisara, which throw a great deal of light on various aspects of the period. The dramas like Kaumudimahotsva of Vajjika, Mudrarakshasa and Devi Chandraguptam of Vishakhadatta also provide valuable information on the period. The Buddhist text Aryamanjusri mulakalpa is an important source of information. The Harshacharita of Banabhatta throws light on the rule of the later rulers of the Gupta dynasty.

The Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hien in his accounts has described the socio-economic and religious condition of the contemporary India. He visited India during the reign of Chandragupta II of the Gupta dynasty. The other Chinese travelers like Hiuen Tsang and I-tsing who came much later have left some information about the traditions of India that are equally useful for the Gupta history. The writings of Kalidas, Vasumitra, Varahamihira, Aryabhatta, Amarasimha etc. who adorned the court of Chandragupta II as '*Navaratna*' provide a vivid picture of the society and culture of the period.

Epigraphy

Inscriptions form the backbone of information on the history of the Gupta period. As many as 42 inscriptions having relevance to the Gupta history have been discovered. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta is the most important of the Gupta inscriptions. Harisena, the writer has given the biographical sketch of Samudragupta. The controversial Mehrauli Iron Pillar Inscription of king Chandra throws light on Chandragupta II. The Udayagiri Cave Inscription and Sanchi Stone Inscriptions give us some idea about the religious policy of the Gupta emperors. The Bhitari Pillar Inscription throws light on Skandagupta.

Numismatics

Gupta coins are an important source of information. Almost all the rulers of the dynasty issued gold, silver and copper coins. The coins give us information on the extent of empire and the religious, economic, political and cultural achievements of the period. They show the progressive evolution of indigenous Indian coinage and its difference from the Kushana models.

Monuments

The monuments of the period throw considerable light on their history. The temples and sculptures of the period reflect their material prosperity and religious policy. The chief centres of Gupta architectures were Deogarh, Aihole, Udayagiri etc. Three different schools of art at Mathura, Varanasi and Nalanda give us independent information.

ORIGIN AND ORIGINAL HOME

According to R.K. Mukharjee, "Like all things great the Gupta Empire grew out of small beginnings which are shrouded in obscurity". Sri Gupta the founder of the Gupta dynasty and his son Ghatotkachagupta were non-entities who ruled over one of the many small kingdoms of north India with the simple title of Maharaja. As such the title Maharaja had become very common by the end of third century A.D. Even the feudatory chiefs had started to use the titles. It is not definitely known where these two rulers ruled and whether they owed allegiance to any paramount sovereign or not? North India was divided into many small kingdoms on the eve of the foundation of the Gupta Empire by Chandragupta I, the third ruler of the dynasty. The matrimonial alliance of Chandragupta I with the ancient historic family of the Lichchhavis enhanced the political status of the obscure Guptas. Chandragupta I married the Lichchhavi princess, Kumaradevi and explicitly took great pride as the son-in-law of the Lichchhavis (*Lichhavayah*). Special significance has been attached to this marriage and even Samudragupta took great pride out of this marriage and proclaimed himself as *Lichchhavi-dauhitra* or daughter's son of the Lichchhavis.

The name or surname Gupta was not unknown in ancient India. There were many Guptas among the officials of Satavahanas of south India. An old Brahmi inscription and a Bharhut Buddhist Pillar inscription of the Sunga period refer to princess and queens born of Gupta family (Gupta *Vamsodita*). There was a Buddhist saint by the name Upagupta. It is, however, quite likely that 'Gupta' was the surname of the Imperial Gupta rulers of Magadha. For instance the name was Sri and the title was Gupta for Sri Gupta. It is not known whether all the Guptas were connected with a parent Gupta clan or there were different families unconnected to each other.

According to H.C. Raychoudhury, the Guptas were Brahmins as Pravavatigupta, the daughter of Chandragupta II was married to Rudrasena, the Brahmin king of the Vakataka dynasty. Many however, have opposed this view.

S. Chatopadhyaya and some other scholars hold the view that the Guptas belonged to the Kshatriya family. Chandragupta I of the Gupta dynasty married Lichchhavi princess Kumaradevi, who were Kshatriyas. Altekar and others on the authority of the Vishnu Purana suggest that the Guptas were Vaishyas. K.P. Jayaswal has expressed that the Guptas were Sudras because they have not mentioned their caste in the inscriptions.

Thus, the origin of the Guptas is shrouded in obscurity. Nothing can be said with certainty. However, generally it is believed that the Guptas were Kshatriyas as both the initial rulers, Srigupta and Ghatotkachagupta had the title of *Maharaja*, which signifies that at least they were Feudatory Chiefs if not more.

There is also a great deal of controversy about the original home of the imperial Guptas. K.P. Jayaswal suggests that the early Guptas lived near Prayag (Allahabad) as their early inscriptions are found in this region. J. Allan and some others suggest that Srigupta ruled somewhere around Pataliputra. D.C. Ganguly suggests that the early home of the Guptas was in Bengal.

The Chinese pilgrim I-tsing who visited India between 671-695 A.D. refers to Maharaja Srigupta (Che-li-ki-to) who built a temple near Mrigasikhavana for the Chinese pilgrims and endowed 24 villages for its maintenance, 500 years before him. Hence, according to him Srigupta must have ruled about 175 A.D. This Che-li-ki-to has been identified as Sri Gupta. He states that Mrigasikhavana was situated around 50 stages (Yojanas) to the northeast of Nalanda from the Ganges according to which it comes to be situated in the Murshidabad district of West Bengal (each yojana being 5/6 miles). The period 500 years given by I-tsing can not be taken as conclusive because Srigupta of imperial Gupta family can not be placed so early. The calculation of Chinese Pilgrim must have been very tentative and a gap of four hundred odd years might have been described as 500 years.

Foucher, on the basis of an illustrated manuscript from Nepal says that the place Varendra with a Buddhist stupa in it was the original home of the Guptas. It has been identified with North Bengal. D.C. Sircar, however, has criticised this view. According to him the Varendra, which had a Buddhist stupa and formed a part of the territory of Srigupta, identified, as the modern north Bengal region does not necessarily mean that it was his original home. According to him the Puranic sources include Saketa (Oudh) in the Gupta dominion.

S.R. Goel places the original home of the Guptas in eastern Uttar Pradesh near Lucknow as their early inscriptions and coins have been found from Mathura, Ayodhya, Lucknow, Banaras etc. Even Altekar, who strongly supports the view of Magadha being the original home, also express surprise that no inscriptions and coins of the early Guptas are found in Bihar. As many as 14 hoards of Gupta gold coins have been discovered in eastern U.P, two in Bihar and two in Bengal.

The early Guptas were mere Feudatory Chiefs for which their territory was not likely to extend over Uttar Pradesh Bihar and Bengal at the same time. In conclusion it can be said that the early Guptas existed as feudatory chiefs with the title of Maharaja some where around eastern U.P.

Whatever be their original home, the first two Guptas ruled over very small regions. When Chandragupta I married the Lichchhavi princess Kumaradevi the Lichchhavis were in possession of

Pataliputra. Chandragupta I extended his empire in all directions, which later included Pataliputra.

Maharaja Srigupta probably ruled form 275 to 300 A.D. Ghatotkachha Gupta who ruled from 300-320 A.D succeeded him. Chandragupta I succeeded Ghatotkachagupta.

CHANDRAGUPTA I

Chandragupta I, who was the first independent sovereign of Gupta dynasty, succeeded his father Maharaja Ghatotkachagupta. The dynasty stepped into limelight with the accession of Chandragupta I to the throne. He assumed the grandiloquent title of *Maharajadhiraja* (king of kings) in contrast to the title of Maharaja by his predecessors. Besides, the issue of a series of gold coins by him further substantiates his independent status.

The Gupta rulers have attached special significance to the Chandragupta-Kumaradevi type of gold coins. This coin establishes his matrimonial relation with Kumaradevi, the Lichchhavi princess. Special significance has been attached to this marriage, as the Lichchhavis were a Kshatriya family with a glorious past. The Lichchhavi relation was the turning point of his career. V.A. Smith says that by this marriage Chandragupta succeeded to the power previously held by his wife's relations and thus occupied a vast empire including Magadha. Allan also suggests that the Guptas took pride in their Lichchhavi blood for which they attached great importance to the marriage. However, nothing is known for certain about the power or political status or even the kingdom (Vaisali or Nepal) over which the Lichchhavis ruled.

These gold coins depict on the obverse Chandragupta I who offers apparently the marriage ring to Kumaradevi. In one specimen A.S. Altekar has identified the object as a '*Sinduradani*'. On the reverse there is the figure of goddess Lakshmi with the Legend *Lichchhavayah.* Goddess Lakshmi is the symbol of prosperity. Hence it is assumed that the marriage might have brought lots of prosperity to the Guptas. In any case the marriage was so significant that even Samudragupta not only tried to establish his blood relation with the Lichchhavis but also took pride in calling himself as *Lichchhavi-dauhitra* (daughter's son of the Lichchhavis).

Chandragupta I had the distinction of starting the Gupta era commencing from either 20th December 319 or 26 February 320 A.D. Although different scholars give different dates for the Gupta era with different rulers to initiate it, yet it is generally accepted that Chandragupta I founded the Gupta era, which marked the year of his accession to the throne of Magadha.

Not much is known for certain about Chandragupta I. Very little is known about the extent of his kingdom. However, his kingdom must have been large enough to justify his assumption of the imperial title of *Maharajadhiraja.* J. Allan and others suggest that the description of the Gupta dominion in the Vayu Purana refers to the dominion of Chandragupta I. The passage runs as

"Anu-Ganga Prayagamcha-Saketan-Magadham-tatha
Etan-Janapadan-Sarvan-Bhukshyante-Guptavamsajah"

The kings born of Gupta family will enjoy all the territories along the Ganges, Prayaga (Allahabad) Saketa

(Oudh), and Magadha (South Bihar). Apparently these formed the empire of Chandragupta I as his son and successor Samudragupta did not conquer these areas. The conquests of Samudragupta have been properly recorded wherein these territories have not been mentioned.

According to the Allahabad Pillar Inscription Chandragupta I nominated his son Samudragupta as his successor in the open court (*Tatpadaparigrahita*). This was a remarkable act of nominating the successor to avoid war of succession and to impart due training to the Crown Prince. This nomination caused heart burning among kin's men of equal birth (*Tulyakulaja*), which indicates that otherwise there could have been a struggle for succession. Rightly enough, during the lifetime of Chandragupta I, Samudragupta received proper training in the art of warfare as well as in administration.

V.A. Smith, A.S. Altekar and some others suggest that Chandragupta died in about 330 A.D. This date does not seem to be acceptable. If Chandragupta married Kumaradevi in 319 or 320 A.D. then by 330 A.D., the year of his succession, Samudragupta would be hardly 10/11 years old. At this age his father was not likely to choose him as his successor. Hence, giving approximately 20 years to Samudragupta, it is assumed that Chandragupta might have died in 340 A.D. Samudragupta was a contemporary of king Meghavarma of Sri Lanka who ruled from 351 to 379 A.D. and sent an ambassador to Samudragupta's court. Hence, 340 A.D. as the year of succession of Samudragupta sounds logical.

SAMUDRAGUPTA

Samudragupta was one of the outstanding personalities of ancient India. His conquests and achievements in the field of culture have become almost legendary. Samudragupta, the son of Chandragupta I and Kumaradevi succeeded to the throne after Chandragupta-I.

SOURCES

The important sources of information on his reign are his inscriptions and coins, such as the Allahabad Pillar Inscription, Eran Stone Pillar Inscription, Nalanda and Gaya spurious Copper Plates and his standard, Archer, Battle axe, Aswamedha, Tiger slayer and Lyricist types of gold coins.

The **Allahabad Pillar Inscription** or the Allahabad Prasasti is unique. It is one of the two inscriptions of Indian history, which give the detailed accounts of the career and achievements of concerned rulers. Besides the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta, the other one is Hatigumpha Inscription of Kharavela. But, for these inscriptions these two great rulers would have been by and large unknown to history. The 33-line inscription has been composed in Sanskrit by his *Sandhivigrahika*, (Minister of war and peace), *Mahadanda Nayaka* (Chief of police and criminal justice) and *Kumaramatya* (Minister in attendance on the Prince), Harisena and inscribed (*Anushthita*) by *Mahadanda Nayak*, Tilabhattaka. This adds credibility to the inscription. As the Minister of War and Peace and as a responsible official, Harisena personally accompanied the ruler in all his conquests for which the description becomes an eyewitness account. However, the fact admits no doubt that being an official under Samudragupta he was least likely to harp on the darker side of the emperor. The use of high-sounding terms in praise of his master like 'his conquest of the whole world' etc. weaken the force of truth.

The inscription was engraved on a stone pillar at Kausambi, which originally had an Asokan inscription. Thus the pillar bears the inscriptions of two great rulers who were poles apart in character. When Asoka tried to spread the massage of peace and non-violence, Samudragupta is held as the greatest warrior of Indian history. A Mughal ruler later shifted the pillar to its present position inside Allahabad fort, built by Akbar.

Unfortunately, it is an undated inscription, inspite of the fact that the Gupta era was already in vogue. Buhler says that the inscription must have been issued before Samudragupta performed *Aswamedha* sacrifice. His *Aswamedha* type of coins show that he performed the sacrifice but the same has not been mentioned in this inscription even though it forms an important event of his career. Some others say that the inscription was issued posthumously by his successor as in the 31st line it has been mentioned that the fame (*Kirti*) of Samudragupta was so great that it had spread over the entire universe (*Vyapte-nikhila vanitalam*) and even went up to the heaven (*Tridasapatibhavan gamanavapta*). The *Prasasti* is written partly in verse and partly in prose. The eight stanzas of verse give information on his early education, military skills, succession etc.

Succession

The 5th stanza of the Allahabad Pillar Inscription states that Chandragupta I deliberately selected his son, Samudragupta as successor because he was considered to be worthy of it (*Tatpadaparigrahita*). He declared his decision publicly before his council (*Sabha*). This decision was not palatable to his kin's men of equal birth (*Tulyakulajah*). They became pale (*Mlana*) with disappointment and the members of the council were exultant (*Uchchhvasita*). There is no reference to a fratricidal war in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription. Probably Harisena deliberately omitted it. The *Aryamanjushri mulakalpa* states that his younger brother Bhasma, a wicked man occupied the throne for three days. Some others suggest that one Kachha was the eldest brother of Samudragupta who fought against him in the war of succession. The discovery of Kachha type of gold coins makes Kachha a tenable figure. This Kachha has been taken as one and the same with Samudragupta by some scholars and as Bhasma by some others. The epithet *Sarva-raja chehhetta* found on Kachha coins show that he was in all probability identical with Samudragupta as the epithet is only applicable to him. Scholars like A.S. Altekar say that the Kachha coins are of later period than Samudragupta. Hence, all these above arguments somehow fail to prove that the succession was not peaceful.

CONQUESTS

Samudragupta possessed an extraordinary military skill. For his successful military campaigns V.A. Smith has called him as the Indian Napoleon. He was engaged in 'hundred battles' and received wounds all over his body. He was himself a frontline soldier and won wars by his personal prowess (*Sangramesu-svabhuja vijitah*). He was a fearless fighter who possessed the dash and drive of a fighter like a tiger (*Vyaghra parakrama*), a hero of hundred battles (*Samarasata*), which left on his body scars (*Varna*) as marks of decoration (*Sobha*) and beauty (*Kanti*). He depended on his personal heroism as his only ally (*Svabhujabala parakrama-bandhoh*). The Eran Stone Inscription describes him as "Possessed of prowess which was invincible (*Apravaryaviryah*)."

The Allahabad Pillar Inscription gives details of his campaign though without geographical accuracy. Through his conquests he tried to bring about the political unification of India (*Dharani bandha*) and made himself an *Ekrat* or sole ruler. He followed the policy of *Digvijaya* in north India wherein he annexed the territories of the defeated kings with his kingdom. In south he perused the policy of *Dharmavijaya* according to which he defeated the enemies but did not annex their kingdoms. However, nothing is known about his army, its shape, size etc.

For convenience the conquests of Samudragupta have been classified into five categories such as (i) conquest of north (*Uttarapatha)* (ii) conquest of south (*Dakhinapatha)* (iii) his relation with frontier kings (*Prantyanta Nrupati*) and tribal states and (iv) conquest of forest states (*Atavika*-Rajya) (v) his relation with the rulers of foreign countries.

First Campaign of North (*Aryavarta)*

According to the lines 13 and 14 of Allahabad Pillar Inscription in his first *Aryavarta* campaign he uprooted (*Unmulya*) three kings. They were Achyutanaga, Nagasena and Ganapatinaga. Achyutanaga was the ruler of Ahichhatra, the capital of ancient Panchala (modern Ramnagar and Barelly districts of U.P). Nagasena was the ruler of Padmavati (Padam Pawaya near Narwar in

Madhya Pradesh). Ganapatinaga was the ruler of Mathura.

Conquest of South (*Dakshinapatha*)

The southern campaigns of Samudragupta have been described in the 19th and 20th lines of Allahabad Pillar Inscription. After having consolidated his position in the north he opened the second phase of his conquests in distant south. In his conquest of south India he followed the principles of *grahana* (capture of the enemy), *moksha* (liberation) and *anugraha* (favouring by reinstating him). He defeated **twelve kings** of south India but instead of annexing their dominions to his kingdom he reinstated the rulers to their respective thrones on payment of tribute. He was satisfied with the establishment of his suzerainty. This has been described as *Dharmavijaya*. This action proves the fact that Samudragupta was an estitute statesman. He had rightly realised that it was very difficult to rule over north and south together with one capital at north. Many rulers have failed miserably in their attempts to do so. The north south division is a perennial problem of Indian history, which continues till today. Muhammad Tughluq failed to rule over north and south even after shifting his capital to south. Aurangzeb spent last 25 years of his life fighting wars in south India yet failed to rule over it. According to the Allahabad Pillar Inscription in south he followed the policy of 'defeated, released and reinstated' the kingdoms.

The twelve kingdoms, which he defeated, were :

King Mahendra of Kosala (Bilaspur, Raipur and Sambalpur region), Vyaghraraja of Mahakantara (forest region of Jeypore, Orissa), Mantanaj of Kaurala (not properly identified probably Jonepur district of M.P, or Kulad near Bhanjanagar in Orissa), Mahendragiri of Pishatapura (Pithapuram in Godavari district), Svamidatta of Kottura (probably Kothoor in Ganjam district of Orissa or a place named Kottura at the foothills of Vizagpattam), Damana of Erandapalla (Vizagpatnam and Chicacole districts of AP), Vishnugopa of Kanchi (Canjeevaram in Tamil Nadu), Hastivarman of Vengi (Peda Vegi near Ellore, Krishna Godavari district of A.P), Nilaraja of Avamukta (a small Pallava kingdom near Kanchi), Ugrasena of Palaka (Nellore district in A.P), Kuvera of Devarastra (Vizagpattam district in A.P.) and Dhananjaya of Kusthalapura (north Arcot district in Tamil Nadu).

In southern campaign Samudragupta followed the policy of expansion as described by Kautilya in *Arthasastra*, which says that a wise king, trained in polity, though possessing a small territory, should conquer the whole earth with the help of the best-fitted elements of his sovereignty. However, the immediate attraction for the southern campaign was his desire for Asvamedha sacrifice. He came in contact with the Nagas during his conquest of *Aryavarta*. The Nagas were famous for performing *Aswamedha* sacrifice with not less than ten sacrifices to their credit. The Guptas being upholders of Brahmanism as 'new converts' after a prolonged period of dominance of Buddhism in India, were anxious to perform a horse sacrifice. Hence, the southern campaign was in the nature of an *Aswamedha* campaign. Samudragupta has also issued *Aswamedha* type of gold coins.

The southern campaign was confined to the eastern part of the Deccan. He had nothing to do with the west coast although some scholars suggest that during his return journey he conquered some kingdoms of west and have tried to identify one or two of the twelve kingdoms in the west coast such as Kunala with Keraliputra etc. Samudragupta proceeded along the east coast as far as Kanchi. He was probably interested to have control over the ports of the East Coast. The existence of many natural ports in the east coast with flourishing overseas activities and commercial contact with Rome in the west and the Southeast Asian countries in the east was also a major source of attraction. The sudden return of Samudragupta from south at a point when he was on the winning spree has not been explained in the inscription. It could be due to the stiff resistance that he gradually came across or due to the fact that his army was tired and exhausted after such a long journey. However, trouble in north India seems quite logical in view of the fact that the respective rulers were reinstated on payment of tribute.

Second Northern Campaign (Second *Aryavarta* Campaign)

Line 21 of the Allahabad Pillar Inscriptions say that while Samudragupta was busy fighting in the south, nine north Indian rulers including the three who were defeated earlier, formed a confederacy and revolted against him. The situation demanded his immediate presence. These nine kings are mentioned as; Rudradeva, Matila, Nagadatta, Chandravarman, Ganapatinaga, Nagasena, Achyutanaga, Nandin and Balavarman. This Rudradeva was perhaps Rudrasena I of the Vakatakas. Matila probably ruled around Bulandshar district of Uttar Pradesh. Nagadatta, Nandina and Balavarman were probably Naga kings ruling in central India.

Chandravarman may be identified with the ruler of Bankura district of West Bengal whose records have been found at Susunnia. Since these rulers challenged the rising power of Samudragupta he violently exterminated (*Prasbha-oddharana-odvritta*) these nine kings of *Aryavarta.* It is generally inferred that in the second campaign all these nine kings were killed.

The two *Aryavarta* campaigns show serious nature of conflict between the Nagas and the Guptas. It is believed that the Nagas formed a conspiracy and tried to capture the Gupta Empire taking the advantage of Samudragupta's absence from his headquarters during his southern campaigns. This made Samudragupta ruthless. But in-spite of these wars of extermination the Naga power survived and later on the Naga Princess Kuveranaga married Chandragupta II, the son of Samudragupta. Pravavatigupta the daughter of Chandragupta II and Kuveranaga was given in marriage to the Vakataka king Rudrasena II. The Vakatakas were very powerful rulers. They were deliberately left alone by the Gupta conquerors including Samudragupta.

Relation with Frontier Kingdoms (*Pratyanta Nripatis*)

The Line 22 of the Allahabad Pillar Inscription gives a list of five frontier kingdoms (*Pratyantanripatis*) that surrendered before him. The victorious career of Samudragupta must have produced deep impression on the frontier kings. The kingdoms existing on his boarders hastened to accept feudatory status and pay tribute instead of risking wars. In the northeast and Himalayan regions many kingdoms became anxious to establish friendly relation with him by paying all taxes (*Sarvakaradana*) levied by him as suzerain, obeying his decrees (*Ajnakarana*) and attending his imperial *darbar* to pay homage in person (*Pranamagaman*). They almost purchased peace. These kingdoms were Samatata (part of east Bengal, bordering on the sea), Davaka (Nowgong district of Assam) and Kamarupa (Guwhati district of Assam). It is learnt from the Damodarpur Plates that a major portion of north Bengal, then known as Pundravardhan Bhukti formed an integral part of the Gupta Empire and was ruled under an *Uparika*, as a vassal of the Gupta Empire. Nepal and Kartripura (Kartarpur in Jallundar district of Punjab) surrendered to Samudragupta as frontier kingdoms on the same terms and conditions.

Conquest of Forest Kingdoms (*Attavikas*)

Some of the forest kingdoms (*Atavikas*) of Punjab, Western India, Malwa and central Provinces voluntarily opted to be placed under Samudragupta's administration (*Prachandasasana*) by giving all kinds of taxes, obeying orders and performing obeisance. A copper plate inscription of the Parivrajaka king, Basti, mentions that there were eighteen such forest kingdoms including Dakhal (Jabalpur). These tribal states were Malavas of the Punjab, Arjunayanas and Yaudheyas of Rajasthan and the Punjab regions, Matrakas (near Sialkot in the Punjab), Abhiras (Western Rajputana), the Prarjunas, Sanakanikas, Kakas and Kharaparikas (all belonging to Malwa and Central Provinces).

RELATION WITH FOREIGN COUNTRIES

According to the lines 23-24, some of the states which lay beyond the frontier of his kingdom in the north-west, western India, far south and islands overseas submitted to the hegemony of Samudragupta by rendering him all kinds of services (*Seva*). These services are described in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription as, (i) rendering personal service to the king (*Atma-nivedanam*), (ii) gifts of maidens for manual service (*Kanyopayana*), (iii) presents (*Dana*), (iv) application (*Yachna*) for charters bearing imperial Gupta seal (*Garudmudrika*) guaranteeing friendly relation so as to leave them undisturbed in the administration (*Sasana*) of their respective states (*Sravishaya*). These foreign states were:

(i) *Daiva-Putra-Shahi-Shahanushahi* the Kushanas of western India. The Kushana king with whom Samudragupta came into contact might have been Grumbates who ruled in 350 A.D.

(ii) The Saka Satraps: The Sakas of western India under the royal family of Chashtana and Rudradaman I followed by Rudrasinha-II, came under the rule of Samudragupta.

The Sri Lankan contemporary of Samudragupta was king Meghavarna. According to the Mahavamsa he sent an ambassador with gifts to secure permission from the Gupta emperor to build a monastery at Bodha Gaya in Bihar for the Sri Lankan pilgrims. It seems, his brother was a Buddhist monk who had come to India on pilgrimage. He experienced difficulty as a foreigner at all monasteries. On his return he requested his brother to build monasteries in India for the Sri Lankan monks. Harisena has interpreted the presentations sent by Meghavarna as tribute. The permission to build the monastery at Bodh Gaya to the north of Bodhi tree was granted. The construction of the monastery, has been referred by Hiuen Tsang as the Mahabodhi Sangharam.

In this connection the reference to the "other island" (*Sarvadvipavasin*) may be taken as the Indianised kingdoms of Malaya peninsula, Java, Sumatra etc. which had Buddhist links.

ASWAMEDHA SACRIFICE

We have numismatic source to substantiate the performance of Aswamedha sacrifice or horse sacrifice by Samudragupta. A series of Aswamedha type of gold coins bearing the picture of a horse tied to a sacrificial post (*Yupa*) on the obverse and the legend *Aswamedha parakramah* (Powerful enough to perform a horse sacrifice) with the figure of the queen on the reverse supposed to have been issued to commemorate the sacrifice prove the performance of the sacrifice. Samudragupta had every justification for performing a horse sacrifice. For a ruler to conquer territories in some form or other, from northwest India to Sri Lanka including Java, Sumatra, etc from Saka-Muranda in the west to Kamarupa in the northeast was not a small achievement. Hence, a horse sacrifice was a logical necessity. However the horse sacrifice has not been mentioned in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription for which it might have come after the inscription. The coins make up the epigraphic deficiency. Samudragupta is given the credit of reviving the horse sacrifice after a long period.

EXTENT OF EMPIRE

The Allahabad Pillar Inscription mentions different types of homage made by different states such as the *Atmanivedana* meaning personal attendance at the court, *Kanyopayanadana* meaning presenting maidens for various personal services and the *garutmad-anka-Svavishaya-bhukti-Sasana-yachana* meaning request for the use of Garuda seal of the Guptas in their respective royal charters. Entire India was brought within these three categories.

The name Samudragupta is often taken as a title, which he had acquired by his conquests. The title means that he was 'protected by the sea' upto, which his dominion extended. The Mathura Inscription states that the fame of his conquests extended upto four oceans (*Chaturudadhisalila-vadityasah*).

The empire of Samudragupta comprised of entire north India excluding Kashmir, western Punjab, western Rajputana, Sindh and Gujrat. In the south it included highlands of Chhatishgarh and Orissa and a long stretch of territory along the east-coast upto Kanchipuram. However, the region comprising of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and a portion of Madhya Pradesh constituted the bedrock of his dominion coming under his direct Government. His empire comprised of almost the whole of the most fertile and populous regions of north India which included the territories bounded by the river Brahmaputra in the east, Yamuna and Chambal in the west, Himalayas in the north and the river Narmada in the south.

Besides this, there were the frontier kingdoms and the tribal kingdoms that had accepted his suzerainty on payment of tribute. It extended from the Brahmaputra in the east to Yamuna and Chambal in the west, foothills of Himalayas in the north and the Narmada in the south. Thus, the empire was the greatest in Indian history since the days of Asoka.

HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Samudragupta was a versatile genius. He was not only proficient in war but also was a learned scholar well versed in the Shastras. He was himself highly cultured and was fond of company of the learned. He had the title of *Kaviraj* for his poetic compositions. Unfortunately none of his works have survived. He was an accomplished musician, well versed in *Vina*.

He was a fearless fighter who possessed the dash and drives of a tiger (*Vyaghra-parakramah*) and was invincible (*Aprativaryaviryah*). He conquered a vast empire extending upto Kanchipuram in south. Although he conquered a vast empire, yet he didn't rule over south India. He was clever enough to realise the futility of the efforts to rule over north and south together.

The performance of Aswamedha sacrifice, the use of the *Garuda* seal indicate that he was a staunch believer of Vaishnavism and has been given the credit of reviving Hinduism after a long period of Buddhist dominance.

His period was remarkable for internal peace, security and prosperity. A flourishing internal and overseas trade added to his prosperity. His connection with the east coast and the west coast enabled him access to the overseas trade. His friendly relation with Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia resulted in flourishing trade. The large number of gold coins justify his prosperity.

He established a strong administration (*Prachandasasana*), which won him the voluntary surrender of many kingdoms. After five centuries of political fragmentation and foreign domination India attained political unity.

Samudragupta issued as many as eighty different types of gold coins such as Standard, Archer, Battle-axe, Kachha, Tiger slayer, Lyricist, Aswamedha and Chandragupta coins. All these coins depict different aspects of his character. The variety of coins marks the height of technical skill in the art of coinage.

Samudragupta was endowed with the qualities of head and heart. He had a soft heart (*Mruduhrudaya*), full of compassion (*Anukampa*) for those who deserved it by their humility (*Abanati*) and regard for him (*Bhakti*). He was a philanthropist (*Lokanugraha*) who helped the poor and the needy.

He has been described as a superman and not as an ordinary mortal (*Amanuja-sadrusa*). Some of his activities have been beyond the comprehension (*Achintya purusa*) of a normal human being (*Manusya*). He has been equated with Gods like- Kubera in wealth, Varuna in justice, Indra in power, invincible like Antaka (Yama), a Brihaspati in sharp and penetrating intellect etc.

He had a number of epithets, which project various sides of his complex character and personality. Some of these are- *Arya, Amanuja, Achintya purusa, Sucharita, Sukhamanah, Kaviraja, Prthivyam Apratirathah, Parakramanka, Apratihata, Kritanta parasu, Sarvarajachchhetta, Vyaghraparakrama, Aswamedha Parakrama, Ajita, Raja, Rajadhiraja, Maharaja* etc.

The exact year of Samudragupta's death is nowhere recorded. He was succeeded by his son Chandragupta II from his wife Dattadevi. The earliest dated reference on Chandragupta II belongs to 380 A.D., which refers to 5th year of his reign. Hence, tentatively it can be assumed that Samudragupta ruled till 375 A.D. One of the last acts of Samudragupta was probably the selection of his successor (*Tatpadaparigrahita*). And the choice fell on Chandragupta.

RAMAGUPTA

Normally it is believed that Chandragupta II succeeded Samudragupta. Samudragupta selected Chandragupta II as his successor (*Tatpadaparigrahita*) in the traditional Gupta style. He was the son of Samudragupta's chief queen, Dattadevi. He had remarkable ability to succeed to the throne.

The discovery of some passages from the lost drama 'Devi Chandraguptam' by Visakhadatta in 1923 has given rise to this Ramagupta theory. In 1923, Sylvian Levi discovered few passages of the drama, Devi Chandraguptam as referred in the Natya Darpan of Ramachandra and Gunachandra. The theory of peaceful succession has been challenged since then. It is a fact that Samudragupta had many sons (*Bahu putra pautra*). It is believed that Ramagupta (Sarmagupta or Rawalgupta) was his eldest son who succeeded him and ruled for a brief period.

According to the description of the drama 'Devi Chandraguptam', Ramagupta was a coward and impotent king. When a Saka king defeated him he agreed to surrender his queen, Dhruvadevi to him. But his younger brother Chandragupta protested against such an action and took over the control of the situation. He himself went in disguise of the queen and killed the Saka ruler. He then killed his brother, married Dhruvadevi and ascended the throne as Chandragupta II. The drama describes how Ramagupta defends his action as a great sacrifice for the safety and welfare of his subjects.

It is difficult to determine the historicity of such a strange incident. The contemporary records of the Gupta period contain no reference to Ramagupta and imply that Chandragupta II peacefully succeeded Samudragupta.

The drama 'Devi Chandraguptam' of Vishakhadatta is a literary work of the later period. Sylvian Levi has placed him between the Gupta period and Harsha. Sten Konow , Jayaswal etc. have described him as a contemporary of Chandragupta II. The original drama is lost. Only fragments are available. However the reference to the story in subsequent works give credence to the theory. The incident has been reflected in the Harshacharita of Bana (7th century A.D.), Kavyamimansa of Rajasekhara and the Sajjan, Cambay and Sangli Copper Plates of the Rastrakuta rulers (9th and 10th centuries A.D.). A similar incident has been mentioned in an Arabic work translated in to Persian by Abdul Hasan (13th century A.D.).

Besides the literary accounts, ten copper coins of one Ramagupta have been found from Malwa region. This Ramagupta of the copper coins has been described by D.C. Sircar, as a local ruler of Malwa. A.S. Altekar says that Ramagupta as the eldest son of Samudragupta was appointed as Governor of Malwa but for some reason or the other was not nominated as his successor. Hence even if Chandragupta II succeeded Samudragupta at the centre he must have faced the wrath of Ramagupta who possibly might have killed him and married his queen Dhruvadevi, a marriage permitted by Dharmashastra.

However, Ramagupta, if at all it was, as the immediate successor of Samudragupta cannot be weak enough to behave in such a cowardice way. A man with the blood of Samudragupta flowing in him can't be a coward like this. A man with the army of Samudragupta at his disposal was not likely to be defeated so ignominiously so as to surrender his wife.

Hence in the absence of authentic evidence, scholars feel hesitant to accept the historicity of Ramagupta as the immediate successor of Samudragupta.

CHANDRAGUPTA II

According to Eran Stone Inscription, Samudragupta had many sons and grandsons (*Bahu putra pautra*). Their names and other details are not available except that of Chandragupta II who was born of Dattadevi, his chief queen. According to Mathura Stone Inscription, Samudragupta, nominated his son, Chandragupta II as his successor (*Tatpadaparigrahita*).

During the reign of Chandragupta II the Gupta empire reached its apogee both in terms of territorial expansion and cultural excellence. As a matter of fact Chandragupta II completed the unfinished works of Samudragupta. He has been considered as one of the greatest rulers of Indian history. He was the worthy son of an illustrious father.

Chandragupta II had several names such as *Devaraja, Devagupta, Devasri, Vikramaditya, Ujjayini Puradhisvara and Sakari.* He used the titles of *Paramabhattaraka* and *Maharajadhiraja.* He had atleast two wives named Dhruvadevi and Kuberanaga. Dhruvadevi has been described as the Chief queen (*Mahadevi*). She was the mother of Kumargupta who succeeded Chandragupta II. His daughter Pravavatigupta was born of Kuberanaga, the Naga princess. She was given in marriage to the Vakataka king Rudrasena II.

SOURCES

He has left behind a number of inscriptions and coins in addition to the literary works to retrace his history. His inscriptions like Mathura Iron Pillar Inscription, Udayagiri Cave Inscription, Sanchi Stone Inscription, Gadhwa Stone Inscription, Mehrauli Iron Pillar Inscription of king Chandra etc. provide information on his reign. He issued a large number of gold, silver and copper coins. The Chinese Pilgrim, Fa-Hien visited India during his reign and has left valuable accounts of the contemporary India. The works of great Sanskrit scholars who adorned his court provide information on the contemporary society.

DATE

We have a number of dated inscriptions to determine the period of his reign. The earliest dated inscription of his reign is the Mathura Pillar Inscription dated Gupta Era 61 or 380 A.D. (319+61=380 A.D.) which has been described either as the first year of his reign or the fifth year. It writes as *Sri Chandraguptasya vijaya rajya samvatsare panchame*, which means 380 A.D. was the fifth year of his reign i.e. 380-5=375 as the year of his coronation. But the last word *panchame* has been read by some as *prathame*, which makes 380 A.D. as the beginning of his reign. Similarly the latest dated record available about his reign is the Sanchi Stone Inscription of Gupta Era 93 or 412 A.D. He might have ruled for one or two years there after. Hence generally his reign period is accepted as 375 A.D. to 414 A.D. as the earliest record of his son and successor Kumaragupta is dated Gupta Era 96 or 415 A.D.

CONQUESTS

Like Samudragupta, Chandragupta II was a great warrior. He inherited a vast army and undertook the task of completing the unfinished works of his father. He had numerous conquests to his credit. The Gupta Empire reached the peak of its height during his period.

In traditional Gupta pattern, he strengthened his empire by matrimonial alliances. As such, the Gupta dynasty was strengthened by its matrimonial alliance with the Lichchhavis when Chandragupta I married the Lichchhavi Princess Kumaradevi. Similarly Chandragupta II used the matrimonial alliances as an important weapon in his diplomatic strategy. He married Kuveranaga, a princess from famous Naga house. The Nagas were a powerful ruling clan who were strongly opposed to the Guptas and had fought two wars against Samudragupta. Hence, this marriage won him the friendship of the Nagas and enabled him to consolidate his position in central India. He gave his daughter Pravavatigupta from his wife Kuberanaga in marriage to Rudrasena II, the Vakataka king of Maharashtra. The matrimonial alliance was a masterstroke of diplomacy as the geographical position of the Vakataka kingdom was such that it could be of immense help to Chandragupta-II in his protracted war against the Sakas. Rudrasena-II had a short reign. His death was personal loss to Pravavatigupta and Chandragupta-II, but a political gain to the Gupta Empire. Pravavatigupta, the dowager queen became the regent for her minor son and continued as such till 410 A.D. Hence, for all practical purposes Chandragupta-II was the ruler of the Vakataka kingdom. According to a tradition, Chandragupta II or his son married the Kadamba princess of the Kuntala country. The Talagunda Inscription of the Kadamba king Kakustha Varman confirms this tradition. In this way the relations of Chandragupta-II encircled the Saka kingdom.

The War with the Sakas

The most important event of his reign was his conquest of western Malwa, Gujrat and Kathiawad from the western Saka Satrapas. The Sakas being of foreign origin were always opposed to any powerful Indian dynasty. According to V.A. Smith the difference of race, creed and manners were basic reasons for the conflict between the Guptas and the Sakas. The Sakas were traditional enemies of the Guptas and a permanent source of danger for the security of the Gupta Empire on their western border. According to Allahabad Pillar Inscription Samudragupta was able to exercise some political control over the Sakas. But this was short lived. Immediately after Samudragupta, the Sakas started to create trouble for the Guptas. If the story of Devi Chandraguptam giving Ramagupta episode is to be relied upon then the fact becomes clear that the Sakas invaded Magadha immediately after Samudragupta. Hence Chandragupta II decided to take on the Sakas as his first target.

Besides his urge for territorial expansion, he had many other reasons to cross sword with the Sakas. As stated above the Sakas were constantly against the Guptas. Hence any powerful Gupta ruler was bound to fight against them. Economic motive perhaps was one of the reasons for the war. The Sakas controlled many important ports of the west coast such as Broach, Sopara and Cambay, which had commercial connection with western countries. Further it was a question of ego conflict. According to Kautilyan theory of imperialism all rulers who had the capacity were to wage war on their neighbours to keep them under control. This was also applicable to Chandragupta II.

The details of the war between Chandragupta-II and the Sakas are not known. But there are positive evidences that Chandragupta II with his feudatory Chiefs, Minister of War and Peace and a vast army had to make a prolonged stay at Malwa. Virasena Saba, a native of Pataliputra was his Minister of War and Peace (*Sandhivigrahika*) who has recorded the events of the war in the Udayagiri Cave Inscription (undated). Another Udayagiri Cave Inscription (401 A.D.) of the Sanakanika Maharaja, a Feudatory chief and the Sanchi Inscription (412 A.D.) of his general, Amrakardev refer to this war.

The success was complete. The Saka ruler Rudrasimha III was not only defeated but his kingdom was annexed to the Gupta empire. The epigraphical sources are silent about the results of the war but Chandragupta-II has been described as *Sakari* (destroyer of the Sakas) for defeating the Sakas. His coins give enough proof of his victory. The Saka silver coins suddenly came to an end between 388 and 397 A.D. and were replaced by silver coins of similar design issued by Chandragupta-II. In fact Chandragupta-II did not issue silver coins earlier. After the conquest of the Malwa he issued silver coins for that region only and in their style.

With the victory over the Sakas, the Gupta Empire extended from the Bay of Bengal in the east to the Arabian Sea in the west. The city of Ujjain with its cultural and commercial affluence became the second capital of the Gupta Empire. Extensive trade and commerce with

Rome and Byzantine Empire was carried on through the ports of west coast. This added to the prosperity of the Gupta Empire. The western border of the empire became safe forever. The most important of all, the Sakas were thrown out of India permanently. A vast stretch of fertile land was added to the Gupta Empire, which considerably increased its economic prosperity. Ujjain became the most important entrepot where land routes from different parts of India converged. The prolonged stay of the Emperor at Ujjain further increased its political importance. Chandragupta II's association with Ujjain earned him the famous titles of *Vikramaditya* and Ujjain Puradhiswara.

Other Conquests

Chandragupta II had some other successful military exploits to his credit. Virasena Saba, his minister of War and Peace says; "Emperor set out to conquer the whole world". His general Amrakardeva is said to have won glory by winning many battles. However no definite information regarding his other military activities is available.

If the king Chandra of Mehrauli Iron Pillar Inscription near Qutb Minar, is to be identified with Chandragupta II then his conquests are well recorded. Scholars have variously identified Chandra of the inscription with Chandragupta Maurya, Kanishka and the Naga king Chandraraso, Chandragupta I of Gupta dynasty, Chandravarman of Bankura in Bengal etc. But generally it is identified with Chandragupta II of Gupta dynasty although there is no convincing proof in this connection.

If the king Chandra of Mehrauli Iron Pillar inscription is identified as Chandragupta II then he led victorious military expeditions in the eastern as well as in the western frontiers of his empire. It records Chandra as "on whose arm fame was inscribed by the sword". It is stated that he, "defeated a confederacy of hostile chiefs of Vanga and having crossed in warfare the seven mouths of the river Sindhu, conquered the Vahlikas "Vanga country denotes the present Bangladesh reign, between the rivers Ganga and Padma known as Samatata. This was included among the *Pratyanta* kingdoms of Samudragupta. Evidently, after Samudragupta some of the rulers of the region might have refused to acknowledge the supremacy of his son for which he had to bring them under his sway by sword.

The other kingdom conquered by him after crossing the seven mouths of the river Sindhu was that of the Vahlikas. They can be identified with Balkh (Bactria) beyond Hindukush Mountains. Here too the motive of the campaign was probably the same. The Kushanas who ruled over a part of this region had acknowledged the supremacy of Samudragupta. For some reason or the other there might have been a conflict, which ended in a fierce war.

EXTENT OF EMPIRE

The empire of Chandragupta II extended from the Himalayas in the north to the river Narmada in the south and from Bengal in the east to Saurashtra in the west. It included modern Bangladesh, Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujrat, Saurashtra, Malwa and major parts of Punjab and Haryana.

COINS

Chandragupta II issued gold, silver and copper coins whereas his predecessors had issued only gold coins. It is believed that he imitated the silver coins from the Saka Satrapas and issued them only for circulation in that area. As many as nine different varieties of copper coins have been found having the same general type i.e. the king on the obverse and Garuda on the reverse. His gold coins rival those of his father in grandeur and brilliance. All his coins throw considerable light on his personality and status. His important coin types were (i) Archer type, (ii) Conch (iii) Chhatra, (iv) Lion-slayer and (v) Horseman. The variations made by him from the coin types of his father seem to be full of significance. As for example Samudragupta issued Tiger Slayer type of coins whereas Chandragupta II issued Lion-slayer type of coins wherein the king is depicted hunting a lion on the obverse with the legend Singhavikram (with powers of a lion) the figure of Goddess Durga on the reverse. There seems to be a deep reason for this difference between the father and the son in matters of hunting. Samudragupta by his conquest of Gangetic Valley came across the royal-Bengal tigers for, which considered it as a pastime to hunt tigers. Similarly Chandragupta II by his conquest over western Malwa and Saurashtra came across forests full of lions. Therefore he thought of lion hunting. Besides, lions were more powerful than the tigers and the lion was the king of the jungle. This proves that Chandragupta II considered himself as a greater warrior than Samudragupta.

ACCOUNTS OF FA-HIEN

Fa-Hien, the Chinese pilgrim visited India during the reign of Chandragupta II. He was the first of a series of Chinese pilgrims to visit the homeland of Buddhism. He came to India in circa 399 A.D. and traveled from place to place upto 414 A.D. He came by land-route across the Himalayas and returned by sea-route from the port of Tamralipti via Sri Lanka and Java. In India his itinerary included Peshwar, Mathura, Kanauj, Sravasti, Varanasi, Kapilavastu, Kushinagar, Vaisali, Pataliputra etc. He stayed at Pataliputra for about four years and learnt Sanskrit.

Unfortunately he has not left any record of the political condition of India during that period; so much so that he does not even mention the name of the ruler in whose kingdom he moved and lived for four years at his capital city. Nevertheless he has left an interesting record of the country. He observes that "the people are numerous and happy; they were not to register their households, or attend to any magistrates and their rules; only those who cultivate the royal land have to pay (a portion of) the grain from it. If they want to go, they go: if they want to stay on, they stay. The king governs without decapitation or (other) corporal punishments". He says that criminals were simply fined lightly or heavily according to the circumstances. In extreme cases of repeated attempts only the right hand was cut off. The officials of king including his bodyguards were paid salaries.

The people were rich and prosperous and vied with one another in the practice of benevolence and righteousness. The heads of Vishayas established centres for dispensing charity. The highways and the large towns were studded with rest houses. He describes the society as law abiding and peaceful. But Hiuen-Tsang who came two centuries later refers to lawlessness from which he had to suffer more than once.

Fa-Hien has described the city of Pataliputra as a great centre of learning and religion. He says that there existed two beautiful monasteries one for the Mahayanas, other for the Hinayanas tenanted by six or seven thousand monks. He felt amazed to see the splendour of Asoka's palace, which was in ruins, which according to him was built by spirits engaged by Asoka. He found in the city, excellent hospitals where poor patients received free food and treatment. He has described a splendid car procession held on the 8th day of the second month of every year. The images of Buddha and Boddhisatva were taken round in differently painted and decorated cars. There were about twenty cars with five tier constructions.

The majority people were vegetarian except the Chandalas. The Buddhist principle of *Ahimsa* (non-injury to animals) was followed. The cowry shells were the only medium of exchange. However, this statement does not take into account the large number of coins that were circulated.

As a Buddhist pilgrim Fa-Hien speaks of Buddhism more enthusiastically. According to him Buddhism was in a flourishing condition in Punjab, Bengal and Mathura.

HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

If the reign period of Samudragupta was the period of conquest and expansion, the reign of Chandragupta-II was the period of consolidation and stabilisation. He completed the unfinished task of his father and acquired a vast empire. He liberated western India from the foreign control by defeating the Sakas.

He brought a political unification of northern India from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea. However, he did not meddle in the southern campaigns. Probably he realised the futility of such a project. He established matrimonial alliances to his political advantage.

He was a recognised Vaishnavite but was full of toleration for other creeds. After a prolonged period of Buddhist dominance the Gupta period in general and that of Chandragupta II in particular was famous for giving Hinduism a new dimension, which has been described as the Brahmanical revival or Neo Hinduism.

He was the chief architect of the Classical Age of Indian history. He was a great patron of Sanskrit language and literature. The famous *Navaratna* (nine Gems), which included Kalidas, Amarsinha, Shanku, Betalabhata, Ghatakarpura, Vararuchi, Varahamihir, Kshyapanaka and Dhanantwari, adorned his court. He was known for his patronage of art, architecture, sculpture and painting. He was an administrative genius. During his reign people lived a peaceful and prosperous life. He established his second capital at Ujjain, which developed to a great cultural centre. Sanskrit was the spoken language inside the royal palace of Ujjain.

KUMARAGUPTA-I MAHENDRADITYA

Chandragupta I was succeeded by his son Kumaragupta I surnamed as Mahendraditya. His earliest recorded date is the Bilsad Inscription of GE 96 = 415 A.D. and the latest date as per one of his silver coins is GE 136 = 455 A.D.

Not much is known about his career but the variety of his coins as well as the wide distribution of his inscriptions indicate that he maintained the unity of the vast Gupta empire. Bandhuvarman then ruled over Dasapura (Mandasor, western Malwa) as his feudatory, Ciradatta was his Governor of north Bengal (Pundravardhan Bhukti) and Ghatotkachagupta was in change of Airikira (Saugar, Madhya Pradesh). As per his coins he performed Aswamedha sacrifice to celebrate his great military career.

Kumaragupta had three wives and four sons. Mahadevi Anantadevi was the mother of Purugupta, Devaki (possibly) was the mother of Skandagupta and there was a third wife who was sister of one of his ministers. The other two sons were Budhagupta and Ghatotkachagupta.

It is learnt from Bhitari Pillar Inscription that the last years of Kumaragupta were seriously disturbed owing to the invasion of Pushyamitras who had "developed great power and wealth". Kumaragupta himself failed to meet the challenge due to old age and sent his son Skandagupta who succeeded in averting the danger after hard struggle.

Like his father Kumaragupta was tolerant in his religious approach. Though he was a staunch Vaishnava yet all religions received respect from him and flourished peacefully.

SKANDAGUPTA

The aged Kumaragupta died when Skandagupta was busy in the battlefield against the Pushyamitras. When Skandagupta returned victorious from the war he reported to his mother "just as Krishna did to Devaki".

This analogy has made scholars describe the name of his mother as Devaki. It is believed that Skandagupta didn't have a peaceful succession. Govinda Gupta, the brother of Kumaragutpa and Ghatotkachagupta, one of the sons of Kumaragupta I assumed the status of independent rulers. In due course Skandagupta defeated all of them and consolidated his position.

Immediately after his accession Skandagupta had to face the repeated invasions of the Ephthlites or white Huns. With great courage and determination Skandagupta inflicted defeat on the Huns. It was a magnificent achievement, which earned him the title of Vikramaditya in imitation of his grand father.

Another great event of his reign was the restoration of the embankment of the Sudarsana Lake, which had been damaged. The lake was constructed by Chandragupta Maurya of Maurya dynasty and was repaired by Asoka and later by Rudradaman. Yet the lake required extensive protection, which was provided by Skandagupta through his local officials.

Skandagupta was equally brilliant in peace. In spite of the incessant wars he issued gold coins which however were less in number than his predecessors. The Huna war must have taxed his financial resources for which there was depreciation in his coinage.

In spite of the war of succession and the Hun invasion, Skandagupta maintained the mighty fabric of the empire with a strong and benevolent administration. Though he himself was a devout Vaishnava yet he continued the catholic policy of his predecessors. Skandagupta ruled from 455 A.D. to 467 A.D. as has been derived from his coins.

The Successors of Skandagupta

Skandagupta was the last great ruler of the dynasty. Though the Gupta dynasty thereafter continued for about a century yet its greatness appears to have departed. The rulers failed to maintain the political unity of the empire and thus, many provinces declared their independence. The Hun invasion, which was successfully resisted by Skandagupta later, brought about the ruin of the Gupta Empire. The Gupta dynasty was fortunate enough to produce a long list of powerful rulers continuously for about a century and a half (319 to 467). Unfortunately after Skandagupta i.e. from 467 A.D. upto nearly 550 A.D. the dynasty failed to produce a single capable ruler. Internal dissension was one of the major reasons for the decline. The rulers like Purugupta, Narasimhagupta Baladitya, Kumargupta II, Vishnugupta, Tathagatagupta or Budhagupta, Kumaragupta III and Vishnugupta ruled during this period. Not only that; their reign periods, names, successions etc. are controversial but also not much is known about their achievements.

GUPTA ADMINISTRATION

The administration of the Guptas is to be studied primarily from the inscriptions supplemented by the coins of various kings of the dynasty. The Accounts of Fa-Hien and the literary works of the period provide information on the administrative structure of the period. The Gupta Age, which reached a high watermark of culture and civilization, received its strength and vitality from the continuous rule of more than one and half centuries under capable rulers like Chandragupta-I, Samudragupta, Chandragupta-II, Kumaragupta-I and Skandagupta.

The Gupta rulers were fond of high-sounding titles and the whole administrative structure was saturated with the designations and titles. They adopted titles or epithets like *Maha Rajadhiraja, Paramavagavata, Parama Bhattaraka, Parama Daivata, Achintya Purusha, Pruthivipala, Samrat, Chakravarti, Ekadhiraja and Sarvabhauma.* The divine right theory of kingship was prevalent. In the Allahabad Pillar Inscription Samudragupta is referred to, as 'God dwelling on the earth'. In the literature he is depicted as an incarnation of Vishnu and equal to Gods like Kuvera, Varuna, Indra, Yama (*Dhanada-Varunendrantaka-sama*). Although kingship was hereditary, the principle of primogeniture i.e. the eldest son to succeed was not always followed. The kings used to nominate the best from among their children to succeed them (*Tatpadaparigrihita*).

Most of the ancient authorities on administration like Kautilya and Manu state that the state or *Rajya* is composed of seven elements (*Saptanga*) such as *Swamin* (sovereign), *Amatya* (minister), *Janapada* or *Rashtra* (territory), *Durga* (fortified area), *Kosa* (treasury), *Danda* (army) and *Mitra* (allies). The Guptas adopted their own administrative system as per necessity.

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

The King

In the Gupta Empire the king was the supreme head of the state. All the Gupta rulers were experts in diplomacy, welfare minded with liberal religious attitude, kind hearted, and cultured. The king was the focal point in the administration. He exercised executive, military and judicial powers. His powers were unlimited. He was the sole representative of the people and guided the destiny of the kingdom. As a Hindu, he had to abide by the religious scriptures. But at the same time, almost all the Gupta rulers were liberal towards other religions.

Next in the rank to the king stood the Crown Prince (*Yuvaraja*) who usually succeeded to the throne either as the eldest son or on being nominated by the king. Queens played important role in the Gupta administration. The Chief Queen was designated as *Mahadevi*. Chandragupta attached great importance to his Chief Queen Kumaradevi. The Gupta princess Pravavatigupta ruled the Vakataka kingdom as a Regent for a long time. In many royal ceremonies like Aswamedha sacrifice and others the Chief Queen played a significant role.

Ministers and Officials

The king was assisted by a group of ministers. Generally the ministership was hereditary if the eldest son was as capable as his father. Virasena Saba was the *Sandhivigrahika* of Chandragupta II by hereditary descent. The ministers were to be "high born, pure minded, heroic, learned, loyal and experts in polity". Harisena, the *Sandivigrahika* of Samudragupta had composed the Allahabad Pillar Inscription. They were to advise the king in all matters. The *Sandivigrahikas* (ministers of war and peace) accompanied the rulers to the battlefields.

It is not very clear whether the Guptas had a *Mantriparishad* (council of ministers). Kalidas refers to a council of ministers where the Chamberlain (Kanchuki) conveyed decision to the king. Generally the ministers acted as individual advisers to the king.

The central administration was carried on with the help of a number of officials such as *Mahavaladhikrita* (Commander-in chief), *Mahadandanayaka* (Chief justice), *Dandapasadhikaranika* (Police chief), *Mahapratihara* (Chief of the palace guards), *Sandhivigrahika* (Minister of war and peace), *Akshapataladhikrita* (Keeper of the documents), *Tadayuktaka* (Treasury officer), *Vinayasthitisthapaka* (in change of religion), *Ranabhandargar adhikaran* (in charge of military exchequer) etc.

Guilds

There were Nigamas or Guilds of different classes of economic interest. These were Bankers' (*Sresthis*), Traders (*Sarthavahas*) and Craftsman (*Kulikas*). These guilds functioned like modern chamber of Commerce. Sometimes these guilds issued seals jointly as the Sresthi-sarthavaha-kulika Nigama or sometimes by two Nigamas also.

Provincial Administration

The Gupta administration was remarkably decentralised and most of the functions were transferred to the provinces. The empire was divided in to provinces, which were called as Desas or Bhuktis. We come across provinces like Pundravardhan Bhukti (north Bengal), Tira Bhukti, (north Bihar) Nagara Bhukti (south Bihar), Ahichhatra Bhukti (Rohilaknanda), Vardhaman *Bhukti* (west Bengal) and Sravasti Bhukti (Oudh). The Uparikas were head of the provinces. The heads of the Bhuktis have been given various designations in different records such as *Bhogika, Gopta, Uparikamaharaja and Rajasthaniya.* Princes of royal blood called *Kumaramatyas* governed important Provinces.

Some information is available regarding the creation of a sub-division known as *Vithi.* However no definite reference is available in this regard. The

Provinces were divided into districts or Vishayas. There were a large number of *Vishayas* in the Gupta administration. A royal official known as Vishayapati or Ayuktaka administered each Vishaya and his office was known as *Adhisthana-adhikarana* (district head office). The Governors of the Bhuktis generally appointed them for a term of five years. The Emperor directly appointed some of the Vishayapatis. Merit seems to have been the consideration while making appointments. For the smooth conduct of the administration there was an Advisory Board in each Vishaya consisting of about thirty members. The Board was called *'Vishayamahattara'*. The Vishayapatis nominated its members. Some of them represented different guilds such as *Sarthavaha* (chief of the chamber of trade and commerce), *Nagar Shresthi* (chief merchant of the town), *Prathma-kulika* (chief artisan), *Prathama Kayartha* (chief scribe) etc. The *Vishayapati* or the District Collector was assisted by a number of officers known as *Saulkika* (collector of tolls and customs), *Gaulmika* (in charge of forests), *Agraharika* (in charge of *Agrahara* settlements) etc.

Village Administration

Each district was divided into a number of villages. The village was the smallest unit of administration. The Gramika or Gramadhyakshya carried on the administration of the village. He was assisted by a group of village elders such as *Kutumbikas*, *Mahattaras* etc. A non-official council called Pancha Mandala also assisted the Gramika. Generally the elders of the village formed the Council. The Council was divided into many subcommittees and each sub-committee looked after different subjects such as agriculture, irrigation, disputes etc.

Municipal Administration

By the time of the Guptas many big cities like Pataliputra, Taxila, Mandasor and Ujjaini had developed. An officer known as Purapala, corresponding to the Nagarvyavaharaka of the Mauryan period or the Mayor of the modern period carried on the administration of the cities. A council known as 'Parishad', assisted the Purapala. The Vishayapati appointed the Purapala. The *Parishad* together with the *Purapala were* in-charge of the administration of the city. There was an officer known as *Purapala-Uparika* who controlled the *Purapalas* of different cities.

Judicial Administration

The king was the fountainhead of Justice. There was a hierarchical system of Judiciary starting from the village headman to the Supreme Court and finally the king. The king held courts for dispensing justice. He was the highest court of appeal, assisted by judges (*Dandanayakas*) and *Purohitas*. The Chief Justice was called *Mahadandanayaka*. Judiciary was very strict and efficient. As reported by Fa-Hien crimes were very rare. Punishments were lenient. Capital punishment was not awarded. The highest punishment was amputation of right hand.

Military Administration

The military department received special attention of the Gupta rulers. All of them maintained a vast army. Their military strength was vital to their success. A vast army naturally required strong administration.

The king was supreme head of the army. The *Sandhivigrahika* (minister of war and Peace) assisted him. There were a number of officers to assist the king. The

Mahabaladhikrita (Commander-in-chief) was the key person.

The army was divided into infantry, cavalry, navy and elephants. The *Mahapilupati* or *Champupati* was the head of the elephant force. *Mahasvapati* was the head of the cavalry. Great importance was attached to the cavalry as we come across titles like *Mahasvapati*, *Aswapati* and *Bhatasvapati.*

There was a good standing army, drawing liberal and regular pay. The army was well equipped with various weapons. In case of necessity, hired soldiers were recruited. Feudatory vassals also supplied contingents at the time of war. The *Ranabhandagaradhikarana* was the officer in-charge of military exchequer.

Revenue Administration

Land was the backbone of Gupta economy. The land tax was the most important source of revenue. That is why the Gupta emperors took special care of the land revenue administration. The land tax was collected as the Bhagakara *system* at some places and *Udranga* at others. The land tax was usually collected in kind, which varied from 16% to 25% according to the quality of the land. The state maintained a regular department for the proper survey and measurement of land as well as for collection of land revenue.

Probably *Akshapataladhikrita* was the keeper of the royal records in connection with taxes. *Pustapalas* (record keepers) were high officials in the department of land administration. He was also the Officer-in-charge of the land transactions.

Besides agriculture other taxes (*Sulkas*) were also collected. The artisans had to pay taxes to the State.

Toll taxes and custom taxes were collected. The tax collector was called *Saulkika.* There was a tax called *Uparikara* levied on cloth, oil etc. when carried from one place to other. Custom duties were collected on salts, mines, crown lands etc. Excise duties were imposed on manufacture of articles. Octroi taxes were also collected. *Ayuktak* was the Accounts officer in the revenue department.

The Gupta administration was well organised both at the centre and in the provinces. The centre was always well informed of the happenings at the province, district and village levels through a network of spy system. It was remarkably decentralised with most functions transferred to district and village administration. A large number of officials suggest the vastness and potentialities of the empire.

The Gupta administration aimed at material and moral progress of the people. It was by and large a welfare state. The allround development of the citizens was the desire of all the Gupta rulers. Although the powers of the king were absolute he was never autocratic. The rulers were tolerant in their religious approach.

The notable feature of the Gupta administration was the democratic form of Government even in an imperial administration. The local affairs were left to the care of the local people.

The Gupta administration represents a remarkable blend of the ideals of monarchy, democracy and federation in a harmonious and co-operative system. However the Gupta administration can't claim absolute originality. It was founded on the historic tradition of the past. It can be said with some amount of authenticity that the Gupta administration was the culmination of Mauryan administration.

Religion

The Gupta rulers were orthodox Hindus. All of them had Vaishnavite titles like *Parama Vaishnava and Parama Bhagabata.* However, almost all the Gupta rulers treated all religions equally. The principal religions of the period were Vaishnavism, Saivism and Buddhism. The Gupta period has been considered as a period of Hindu revivalism. Because of long period of dominance of Buddhism since the days of Asoka the Hinduism had not received proper royal patronage. The Guptas fulfilled the long cherished desire of the Hindus and a Hindu renaissance took place. The people in general were deeply religious and God fearing in nature. Temples of Hindu Gods and Goddesses were built in large numbers. Sanskrit laguage as the language of Hinduism was patronized.

The Gupta kings recruited officials strictly on the basis of talent irrespective of their religious convictions. Sri Gupta the founder of Gupta dynasty built a Buddhist temple at Mrigasikhavana (mi-li-kai-si-kia-pano). Similarly Samudragupta granted permission to a Sri Lankan king, Meghavarma to construct a monastery at Bodha Gaya.

The Gupta emporers were very catholic in their religious outlook. Buddhism and Jainism were not only tolerated but were lavishly supported.

GOLDEN AGE: CULTURAL ATTAINMENTS

The Gupta age has been styled variously as the Golden Age, the Classical Age, the Age of Renaissance, and the Age of Hindu Revivalism etc. This has been compared with the Periclean Age of Greece, the Augustan Age of Rome and the Elizabethan and Victorian Ages of Britain.

The conventional definition of classical age is one where literature, art, architecture and other branches of knowledge reach high levels of excellence. There was phenomenal intellectual and artistic activity during the period, which may well be regarded as the culmination of Indian efforts of the previous periods. Peace and prosperity of the period contributed towards its glory. Benevolent administration and liberal patronage of culture also had their share of contribution.

Unification of the Country

The Guptas shattered the rule of foreign powers like the Sakas, sounded the death knell for the Kushanas, wiped the small kingdoms and established a unified empire under their sovereign rule. Not only the foreign powers were defeated and thrown out but also the mighty Gupta army ensured that they would not dare to return back. Hence, a strong central rule with an army and a well-organised bureaucracy ensured the safety, security and political unity of the empire. The Gupta period is remarkable for the absence of foreign invasions. The Guptas were the first of the north Indian rulers to launch a systematic invasion over the south. Hence, for the first time the entire country from north to south was placed under one unified administrative system, one sovereign and one army. It was the political as well as administrative unity of India that encouraged peace and stability. The Gupta Empire adopted a structure, which served as the blue print for all medieval kingdoms.

Benevolent Administration

The Imperial Guptas may be described as the last great empire builders as all the empires thereafter embraced only parts of India. From Chandragupta I to

Skandagupta the dynasty produced five powerful monarchs in continuous succession for two centuries, a rare thing in Indian history.

The Gupta rulers established not only a stable government but also a benevolent administration. The king was the supreme head of the state that had assumed semi-divine character. The rulers maintained proper law and order in the state and always supported *Brahmanas*, *Sramanas* and other learned men. The officers looked to the welfare of the subjects and the government aimed at the moral, material and intellectual welfare and general prosperity of the people. Fa-Hien, the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim who visited India during the reign of Chandragupta II states that the king governed without decapitation or other corporal punishments. The character of the people was marked by honesty and integrity. Fa-Hien states that throughout his travel in India during the reign of Chandragupta II he never faced any highway rubbery. The people were happy and contented.

Brahmanical Revival and Religious Liberalism

The Gupta age can be regarded as an era of Brahmanical revival. All the Gupta rulers were patrons of Brahmanical religion. They adopted titles like *Parama-Bhagabata, Parama-Bhattaraka, Parama-Purusa and Parama-Daivata.* This becomes very vital against the background that the period preceding the Guptas saw the phenomenal rise of Buddhism and Jainism. Hinduism was relegated to the background since the days of Asoka and Kanishka. However, there is no evidence to show that the revival of Brahmanism during classical age was accompanied by the persecution of other religions. On the contrary, the Gupta emperors were very catholic in their religious outlook and lavishly supported all religions in general and Buddhism in particular. There was no narrow sectarian feeling. The accounts of the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Fa Hien bear out the fact that Gupta rulers respected all faiths. The Gupta Emperors were liberal and tolerant in their religious approach. Inscriptions registering endowments for the holy places of Buddhism, Jainism as well as for Hinduism abounds in all parts of the country.

Their liberal approach combined with the growth of Buddhism and Jainism brought about a radical transformation in the religious beliefs of the people. The austere Buddhism with its rigid rules when exposed to the catholic Bhakti movement during Gupta period finally came to be absorbed in the wide fold of Hinduism. Buddha was accepted as one of the ten *Avatars* (incarnation) of Vishnu. The Vedic Gods like Surya, Varuna and Indra receded to the background and new Gods like Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswar came to the forefront. The concept of monotheism with preeminence of Supreme Gods, Vishnu for Vaishnavism and Siva for Saivism developed. All these have been generally described as Bhagabatism or Neo-Hinduism.

Sanskrit Language

The Gupta age was marked by a vigorous outburst of Sanskrit literature. Sanskrit replaced Prakrit. Inscriptions like Allahabad Pillar Inscription, Mandasor Inscription and probably the Meherauli Iron Pillar Inscription began to be written in Sanskrit. The Gupta rulers were zealous admirers and liberal patrons of Sanskrit language. Many Gupta rulers themselves were very good writers in Sanskrit. Samudragupta had the title of *Kaviraja.* Sanskrit was not only made the official language but also was adopted as the spoken language in the royal palaces in general and that of Ujjain in particular.

Brilliant literary achievements of the period have led the scholars to consider it as renaissance of Sanskrit literature. However, this renaissance or revival theory has been considered as misleading by many others. According to them the Sanskrit language had never gone out of absolute existence or eclipsed rather was present in a flourishing stage althrough even during the period of enlightened rulers like Kanishka, Rudradaman I and others. The foreign invaders after having conquered India Indianised themselves and greatly patronized Indian literature. Hence, Sanskrit had never lost its position to any other language. The Buddhist and Jaina literatures that began with Pali and Prakrit in the later phase used Sanskrit to a greater extent. Most of their works were in prose with verse passages in mixed Sanskrit. The Mahayana monks in particular started to write their scriptures in Sanskrit.

Religious Literature

Gupta literature can be classified into two groups – religious and secular. The growing influence of Brahmanism gave an impetus to the development of religious literature. The eighteen *Puranas* and sixteen *Upapuranas* received their final shape during this period. Even the great epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* got their final touch up and the present shape during this period. *Manusmriti* or the code of Manu was revised.

In Buddhism, Nagarjuna founded the Madhyamika school of Philosophy. He was the author of *Madhyamika Sutra* and a commentary on *Prajnaparamita Sutra*. Arya Deva, a pupil of Nagarjuna wrote *Chatussataka.* Asanga wrote *Sutralankar*. His younger brother, Vasubandhu wrote *Ashidharmakosa,* which is held in high esteem in *Mahayana* Buddhism. Dinaga wrote the famous treatise on logic, the *Pramana-Samuchchaya.*

The Jaina canonical literature was also influenced by Sanskrit and within a very short time produced many great scholars. Many Hindu classics were recast in Jaina version to popularize Jainism. Vimala produced the Jaina version of *Ramayana*. Devardhi Gani, Siddhasena Divakara and Akalanka Deva were other important Jaina writers of the period.

Secular Literature

The Gupta monarchs, being highly cultured, liberally patronized literature and a good number of intellectual celebrities were also associated with them. Samudragupta himself had earned the title of *Kaviraja* (king of poets) for his various poetical compositions. Harisena, the Minister of War and Peace (*Sandhivigrahika*) of Samudragupta was a notable poet of his court. He composed the famous Allahabad Pillar Inscription in ornate prose and poetry, a very good specimen of literary art. Virasena Saba was another important high official in the court of Chandragupta II who was an accomplished grammarian and poet. The Mandasor Inscription of Kumaragupta I was composed by Vatsabhatti in *Kavya* style. Some of the *Smritis* were either composed or received their final form during this period. The *Smritis* of Yajnavalkya, Narada, Katyayana and Brihaspati most probably belonged to this period. The Yajnavalkya – Smriti may be regarded as the official law book of the Guptas. The works of Narada, Katyayana and Brihaspati dealt the civil law and legal procedure.

If the identification of Chandragupta II with the legendary Vikramaditya is to be accepted then his court must have been adorned with the famous *Navaratna* or nine gems such as Kalidasa, Vetalabhatta, Kshapanaka, Barahamihira, Ghatakarpura, Vararuchi, Dhanvantari, Amarsingh and Shanku. However, it is not certain if all of them were contemporaries.

Kalidasa, a resident of Malwa was probably a contemporary of Chandragupta II and or Kumaragupta I. His famous epic, the *Raghuvamsa* refers to the military exploits of Chandragupta II. In *Raghuvamsa* Kalidasa has given the concept of a united India. He describes king Raghu as a king of solar race and as a sovereign of the entire earth. Among his greatest works are the two epic poems *Kumarasambhava* and *Raghuvamsa*, the lyrical poem *Meghaduta* and the great drama *Shakuntala*. His other works are *Ritusamhara*, *Malavikagnimitra* and *Vikramorvarshin*. Kalidasa was one of the greatest poets and dramatists of all times. He has often been described as 'the Shakespeare' of India. His works are invaluable gems of Sanskrit literature and easily rank among the best literary productions of any age and any time. His works throw a great deal of light on the social, economic, political and cultural life of the period. However, although we know so much about his magnificent works, we know next to nothing about the poet himself.

Though somehow eclipsed by Kalidasa there were many other important writers of repute. Shudraka's *Mrichchhakatika* was a superb social drama. Vishakhadatta's play *Mudra-Rakshasa* dramatized the revolution that led to the fall of the Nandas and the advent of Chandragupta Maurya on the throne of Magadha. His other work *Devi Chandraguptam* is a political drama dealing with Ramagupta. There were other works like

Bharavi's *Kiratarjuniya*, Magha's *Sisupalabodha*, Bhartihari's *Nitisataka*, Bhatti's *Ravanavadha* (or *Bhatti Kavya*), Amarsingh's *Amarakosa* (famous Sanskrit dictionary), Vishnu Sharma's *Panchatantra*, Subhandhu's *Vasabadatta*, Dandin's *Kavyadarsha* and *Dasakumara Charita*. Vishnu Sharma's *Panchatantra* describes stories having morals intended to teach politics to the princes. This has been translated into many languages. It outbids Aesop's Fables and *The Arabian Nights*.

Science and Technology

During Gupta age mathematics and astronomy were cultivated with success and distinction. Illustrious figures like Aryabhatta and Barahamihira flourished during the age. Aryabhatta wrote his treatise *Aryabhattiyam* in 499 A.D., which was the first to treat mathematics as a separate subject dealing with arithmetic, geometry, algebra and probably trigonometry. He was the first Indian astronomer to discover that the earth was a sphere and rotated on its axis. His calculation of the size of the earth was very near to modern estimation. In his famous book *Suryasiddhanta* he explains that the lunar eclipse was due to the shadow of the earth falling on the moon. His unique contribution to the world of science was to place the value of numbers from 1 to 9 and the use of zero and the consequent evolution of decimal system. Hence, it is no wonder that the first Indian satellite sent to the space was named after him.

Another astronomer and natural scientist was Barahamihira. He divided astronomy into three branches – *Tantra* (astronomy and mathematics), *Hora* (horoscope) and *Samhita* (astrology). His work, *Brihat-Samhita* is an encyclopedia on astronomy, geography, architecture, metallurgy etc. His other works are *Panchasiddhantika*, a treatise on astronomy and *Brihatjataka* and *Laghujataka* works on astrology. Aryabhatta and Barahamihira were well acquainted with the contemporary Greek astronomy and their works clearly contain many Greek technical terms.

Latadeva was a well-known scientist and a disciple of Aryabhatta. He expounded *Paulisa* and *Romaka Siddhanta.* Brahmagupta was another famous astronomer and mathematician who anticipated Newton by declaring that "all things fall to the earth by law of nature, for it is the nature of the earth to attract and keep things". His *Brahmagupta Sidhanta* was a great work.

The period showed keen interest in medical science. The earlier works *Charaka Samhita* of Charaka and *Susruta Samhita* of Susruta were considered as guidebooks on medicine and surgery. The *Ashtanga-Samgraha* by Vagbhata was a systematic summary of Charaka and Susruta. The *Navanitakam* was another medical work on recipes, formulas and prescriptions. Palakapya was the author of *Hastyayurveda,* a treatise on veterinary science dealing with diseases of elephants.

Chemistry and Metallurgy made striking progress during the period. The rustless Iron Pillar of Mehrauli in Delhi shows the progress of metallurgy during the period. The pillar even with huge structure of 24 feet height and 40 C.M. diameters has defied the onslaught of nature for more than 1500 years and has not yet developed rusting. A number of bronze and copper images of Buddha have also survived. Hieun Tsang saw a 25 meters high copper statue of Buddha, as reported.

Education

India made great progress in the field of education during the Gupta period. There were famous educational institutions at Taxila, Varanasi, Ujjain, Ajanta and Kanchi. Different universities specialized in particular fields of study. For example, Taxila specialized in science and medicine, Varanasi in religion, especially Buddhism, Ujjain in astronomy, Ajanta in art and architecture etc.

Nalanda being the biggest of all seats of learning handled all branches of knowledge. Vallabhi and Vikramashilla were two other great centres of learning. The Buddhist and Jaina monasteries also were centres of learning and education. Besides helping the spread of religious education in India these monasteries often sent their teachers to different foreign countries. Atleast twenty-five Indian monks had gone abroad before the arrival of Fa-Hien. Fa-Hien during his visit has given a long list of centres of secular and religious education, which does not include the famous University of Nalanda.

The University of Nalanda represented the intellectual image of the age. It was founded by Kumaragupta-I (traditionally believed as Sakraditya). It was a symbol of great international and universal cultural centre. It started as a Mahavihar of the Mahayana Buddhism but soon developed into a magnificent institution of manifold intellectual activities and a great centre of learning. It has been described as the 'Oxford' of ancient India. It attracted eminent scholars like Nagarjuna and his pupil Arya Deva from far south.

We get a vivid description of Nalanda University in the accounts of Hiuen Tsang who came to India during 7th century A.D. i.e. about 200 years after its establishment. Hiuen Tsang himself studied here for five years. During this period it was a six storeyed building with 10,000 students on the rolls. It received lavish royal patronage and provided free education. Though the university specialized in the study of Mahayana Buddhism get its curricula included Buddhist and Brahmanical literature both religious and secular.

Economy

A highly organised and efficient administration resulted in all round prosperity of the country. Economic stability gave rise to growth of number of prosperous urban centers. Industry, trade and commerce showed positive signs of progress. The large numbers of beautiful gold coins issued by the Gupta rulers testify the growth of imperial economy. Land revenue called as *Bhagakara* or *Udranga* formed the greatest source of wealth for the state. Generally, the state claimed one sixth of the produce as tax, which however, varied from place to place according to quality of land. It was usually collected in kind.

The Gupta period witnessed prosperous inland and overseas trade and commerce. Trade and commerce was directly proportionate to the progress of the industry. Along with trade and industry, agriculture has been one of the mainstays of economy. Fa-Hien, has mentioned that the general richness of the people made them charitable. There were large number of hospitals, wayside rest houses and charitable institutions. The hospitals provided free service to rich and poor alike.

Industry, Trade and Commerce

Peace and order helped the expansion of trade and commerce both in land and overseas. Different varieties of cloth, food grains, spices, salt, bullion and precious stones were the main articles of trade. The textile industry was at a flourishing stage. It is learnt from *Amarakosha* that different varieties of bleached and unbleached silk were being produced. Animal products like wool, skin, ivory, bones and feather formed a good source of industry. *Amarakosha* make special reference to leather industry. Mining was at a well-developed stage. *Amarakosha* gives a list of metals including gold, silver, copper, iron, brass, tin and lead. *Brihatsamhita* mentions more than 30 jewels including diamond, sapphire, emerald, ruby etc. Jewelry was at developed stage.

In the overseas trade the period enjoyed close contacts with Egypt, Greece, Rome, Persia, Arabia, Syria, Sri Lanka and South East Asia. The ports of Sindhu, Kalyan and Chaul in the west and Kaverpattanam, Palur and Tamralipti in the east were important ports among other which facilitated overseas trade and commerce.

The age of the Guptas was a prosperous time for the rise of guilds (*sreni*) in North India, which were often entrusted, with the management of towns or parts of the cities. There were guilds of the bankers (*sresthin*), traders (*sarthavaha*) and artisans (*kulika*). Sometimes various guilds were combined and were entrusted with joint responsibility. The guilds were autonomous bodies having their own laws. The guilds usually carried on prosperous business.

Art

In the fields of art, architecture, sculpture and painting the Gupta period attained high level of excellence. In the history of Indian art, Gupta art occupies a significant position of prestige and glory. The Gupta style was unified and national. It was almost a spontaneous growth and not a self-conscious exercise in technique. The Gupta art was thoroughly imbibed with the spirit of Indian life and religion. It was a flower of established tradition, a polished and perfected medium from the standpoint of thought and feeling.

The chief characteristics of Gupta art were refinement, simplicity of expression and religious virtuosity. Intellectual elements dominated the Gupta art. It was a culmination of an established tradition, which absorbed the classical art of Mathura and Amaravati, yet had a distinctiveness of its own.

Architecture

The Gupta age heralded a new epoch in the history of Indian architecture. Though we are left with very few specimens of Gupta architecture, for most of it, were destroyed by Muslim invaders, yet the few surviving monuments speak volumes. The brick temple of Bhitarigaon in Kanpur district, the Dashavatara temple of Deogarh in Jhansi district and the temple at Sanchi are few surviving specimens. These small unimposing structures with square sanctuaries, small porticos and flat roofs were executed excellently and the stones were held together without any mortar. But few shrines with *Shikhara* on the roof are also available. Though these temples of the Gupta period were neither imposing in dimensions nor very beautiful in design yet they marked the beginning of temple architecture, properly so called in north India.

According to S.K. Saraswati, "The temple at Sanchi though modest in dimensions, its structural propriety, symmetry and proportion, appreciation for plain surfaces and restraint in ornamentation may very well compare with best creations of classical architecture of Greece".

Few monuments of India can equal the workmanship of Dashavatara temple of Deogarh. The other important temples of the period include the Vishnu temple of Tigawa, Jabalpur, Siva temple of Bhumra, Madhya Pradesh, Parvati temple of Ajaigarh.

The period also produced some important stupas as at Mirpurakhas in Sindh, Dhamekh at Sarnath (39.5 meter high) and two stupas at Rajgir.

The rock cut architecture of Ajanta, Ellora and Aurangabad are remarkable for their variety and beauty of pillars and the fresco paintings with which the walls and ceilings are decorated. It contained the two conventional types – the Chaitya hall, i.e. the shrine proper and the Vihara, the monastery.

Sculpture

The Gupta sculpture was known for simplicity and serenity. It marked an apogee of development. It struck a perfect balance between the debasing sensuality of the Kushana period and the symbolic abstraction of the later period. The foreign influence, which we find in the Gandhara and Mathura schools have disappeared in the Gupta art making it totally Indian.

The reflective and tranquil mood of seated Saranath Buddha surrounded by an ornate halo and flanked by two small demy-gods and radiating an aura of divine pleasure marks the highest triumph of Indian art. It clearly indicates a new aesthetic quality, serving as 'conscious vehicle of the intellectual and spiritual conceptions of the people'. The image is carved in chunar sandstone and has a surface texture of shining smoothness. The statue of the standing Buddha at Mathura is one of the finest examples of art of sculpture.

It is made of red sandstone and is 127 cm in height and conveys an awesome dignity and authority. This Buddha image totally differs from that of the Kushana period.

However the Gupta art was not purely Buddhist, as many Brahmanical images of great merit were also created. The best specimens of Hindu Gods in their original forms were seen in different places. The Vishnu image of Mathura, the Varaha image of Udayagiri and the images of Deogarh represent their religious glamour and dignity.

Painting

In the art of painting the Gupta age attained a high level of proficiency. The specimens of Gupta painting are preserved in the Ajanta caves, the Bagh caves (Gwalior), the Sittannavasal temple in Puddukottai and the rock-cut chambers in Sri Lanka. The fresco paintings in 6 out of 29 caves of Ajanta have survived the ravages of time. The painting of caves I, II, IX, XVI, XVII and XIX need special mention due to their splendour and beauty. The murals of Ajanta include three fold aspects of decoration, portraiture and narration. The decoration designs include animals, trees and flowers in profusion for ornamental decoration. The portraits of the central figures are those of Buddha and Bodhisatva. The narrative scenes mostly portray *Jataka* stories. Though painted for religious purposes the paintings of Ajanta bear a secular rather than religious message. Here are princes with their palaces, ladies in their harems, coolies carrying loads, beggars, peasants and ascetics.

The figure of Avalokiteswar Padmahari in Cave No I is one of the best-known single figures of Ajanta. The figure is known for its colour and design.

The paintings of Bagh caves are similar to those of Ajanta. They have same variety of design, vigorous execution, decorative quality and secular nature. The painting in caves No. II, III, IV, V and VII have survived till date. The paintings of dancing girls and procession of elephants deserve special mention.

The remains of the beautiful figures of twenty-one *Apsaras* painted at a height of 180 mtrs. on a rock citadel at Sigriya in Sri Lanka belonging to this period are simply excellent.

Cultural Expansion

During Gupta age India did not live a life of isolation. She maintained commercial relation with China, Sri Lanka, Persia, Arabia, Myanmar, Java, Sumatra, Tibet, Japan and the Roman Empire. Buddhism acted as the vital link in the commercial and cultural interaction with the outside world. The Buddhist missionaries were the first to traverse the perilous seas, full of pirates even without a mariner's compass. Traders followed them.

A long period of internal peace and stability helped the growth of foreign trade. The discovery of Roman gold coins in different parts of south India justifies the volume of trade of the period with the west. Trade contacts with south East Asia produced far-reaching effects on both sides. The missionaries as well as the traders carried the Indian culture to the countries of South East Asia. The cultural assimilation finally resulted in the establishment of Greater India or Indian colonies. Java was one of the colonies of India. Fa Hien during his visit to Java in 414 A.D. has described Java as a Hindu kingdom.

Numerous Chinese and Buddhist monks visited India. Fa Hien, the first of the three famous Chinese pilgrims, visited India from 405 A.D. to 411 A.D. during the reign of Chadragupta II. Inspite of the visit of a number of Chinese scholars, India has been little affected by the Chinese culture where as in 379 A.D. Buddhism was declared as the state religion in China.

Numerous inscriptions prove that the local kings of South East Asia and Indonesia adopted Hindu customs and made Sanskrit as their official language. Many Indians settled in Central Asia like Kumarajiva, the Buddhist philosopher who settled at Kuchi. He was instrumental in translating 106 Sanskrit texts into Chinese and explaining the principles of Buddhism to the people of China.

Contact with the outside world resulted in the construction of many magnificent monuments abroad and vice versa. King Meghavarna of Sri Lanka built a monastery at Bodh Gaya after obtaining due permission from Samudragupta. Similarly, Buddhist and Hindu monuments sprang up outside India. The stupa of Borobudur in Java and the great Vishnu temple of Angkorvat in Cambodia are the finest examples of Indian art and architecture abroad.

The Guptas ushered in an age of social and cultural reconstruction unraveled in any other age of Indian history. There was an all round progress in fields of art, literature and science. The liberal patronage by a successive list of powerful rulers established a culture per excellence. Many features of the Gupta age have left legacies for the future. The great works of Kalidasa and Aryabhatta have immortalized the age. The frescos of Ajanta continue to enthrall the spectators even today.

Chapter - 8

HARSHAVARDHAN
(606 A.D. - 647 A.D.)

After the decline of the Gupta Empire, north India once again entered into a period of political chaos. A number of petty independent kingdoms filled up the political vacuum left by the Guptas. With the decline of the Guptas, Pataliputra lost its importance and claim as the political centre of India. Fortunes fluctuated, dynasties rose and fell and finally after a lapse of more than one century since the decline of the imperial Guptas, forces of unity gathered round the city of Kanauj which emerged as the new centre of political gravity under the Pushyabhutis. With the emergence of Harshavardhan the political unity of a greater part of India was reestablished. He had neither the lofty idealism of Asoka nor the military skill of Samudragupta, yet he had something of both.

SOURCES

The principal sources of information about the reign of Harshavardhan are plenty.

Literary

The Harshacharita composed by his court poet Banabhatta gives a detailed description of Harsha. The accounts of the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang, Si-Yu-Ki (The records of the Western World) and the writings of Hwli-li on the life of Hiuen Tsang, being eyewitness accounts are considered as a treasure house of accurate information on the contemporary period. Ma twan-lin's Hsin Tang Shu gives details on the exchange of missions between India and China.Harsha's own writings like Ratnavali, Priyadarshika and Nagananda throw enough light on the history of the period. The Buddhist text Aryamanjusri Mulakalpa provides information on various aspects of Harsha's life.

Epigraphy

Epigraphy throws much light on Harsha's reign. The Madhuvana Plate, the Sonepat Plate, the Banshkhera Inscriptions, Nalanda Seals and the Aihole Inscription of Pulakesi-II provide valuable information about his reign.

Numismatic Sources

The coins of Harsha form reliable source of information on his reign. Harsha distributed thousands of coins in his Councils held at Prayag and Kanauj. These coins contain the names of the rulers, their period etc.

Monuments

The monument of the period in general and the Nalanda University in particular help us in retracing the history of the period.

ANCESTRY

According to the Harshacharita the predecessors of Harsha were rulers of Thaneswar or Srikantha in Eastern Punjab. He belonged to a family, which derived its name from its founder, a devout Saiva, by the name Pushyabhuti. He seems for all practical purposes to have been a legendary figure. The inscriptions and the royal seals of the Pushyabhutis mention the names of four predecessors of Harsha such as Naravardhana, Adityavardhan, Pravakaravardhan and Rajyavardhan. Naravardhan and Adityavardhan were probably Feudatory Chiefs either of the Hunas or of the Guptas. Adityavardhan is known to have entered into matrimonial relations with the later Guptas by marrying the later Gupta princess probably a sister of Mahasenagupta.

Adityavardhan's son and successor Pravakaravardhan was the first ruler of the dynasty to assume the titles of a full-fledged sovereign such as *Maharajadhiraja* and *Paramabhattaraka*. Banabhatta describes him as "a lion to the Huna deer, a burning fever to the king of Sindhu, a troubler of the sleep of the Gujrat, a bilious plague to the scent elephant, the lord of Gandhara, destroyer of the skills of the Latas, an axe to the creeper of Malwa's glory". The description was more poetic than realistic. Nevertheless, Pravakaravardhan not only acquired an independent status but also conquered a large kingdom. He gave his daughter, Rajyasri in marriage to Grahavarman, the Maukhari king of Kanauj (Kanyakubja). Having secured an important ally Pravakaravardhan sent his eldest son Rajyavardhan with a large army against the Hunas.

Meanwhile Pravakaravardhan became seriously ill and died in 604 A.D. Rajyavardhan succeeded in his war against the Hunas. On the sad demise of his father he had to return in a haste to the capital and assume the charge of the administration in 605 A.D. Immediately after his accession he heard about the death of his brother-in-law, Grahavarman of Kanauj and the capture of his sister, Rajyasri by Devagupta, king of Malwa and his ally Sasanka, the king of Gauda. Rajyavardhan left his younger brother Harshavardhan in-charge of the capital and proceeded to Kanauj. Rajyavardhan while fighting against Malwa won initial success and killed Devagupta but he himself was treacherously assassinated by Sasanka.

This brought Harsha to the throne of Thaneswar in 606 A.D., when he was only 16 years old. He was born in 590 A.D. of Pravakarvardhan and Yasomati. His immediate and pressing responsibilities were to rescue his distressed sister, to free Kanauj from the control of Sasanka who had occupied it after the death of Devagupta and to reinstate Rajyasri there.

To realise these objectives Harsha advanced with a strong force. He strengthened his position by an alliance with King Bhaskaravarmana of Pragjyotish (Assam). In the meantime Rajyasri was released by Sasanka and flew to the Vindhya forest. Harsha himself undertook extensive travels in search of his sister and finally found her, just when she was about to immolate herself, out of grief. Harsha then returned to his base camp. Unfortunately our main source of information, Harshacharita abruptly comes to an end at this stage.

Sasanka hesitated to face an open war with Harsha. He had Harsha from the front and Bhashkarvarman from the back. Thus, he retreated to

Gauda. By this time Rajyasri who was supposed to assume the reigns of government of Kanauj had become a Buddhist and declined to rule. In the absence of any other rightful Maukhari claimant the ministers of Kanauj led by Poni invited Harsha to accept the crown. Harsha accepted the offer with hesitation. He assumed the office of the ruler but abstained for sometime from assuming any high sounding title other than *Kumara Siladitya.* It is said that Harsha approached a Buddhist Oracle on the banks of Ganga and sought his advice. Bodhisatva advised him to accept the offer in order to revive the glory of Buddhism. But he was asked not to use the title of Maharaja and not to sit on the throne. According to Bana, since he was already the king of Thaneswar, in Kanauj he was merely in-charge of the Government with a status no better than a guardian or regent. It is said that Harsha did all these things because he was not sure of the feelings and support of the people of Kanauj. It is also believed that Grahavarman had a younger brother for whom Harsha was reluctant to occupy the throne. But later on, when he had consolidated his position and silenced all opposition against him he brought about the amalgamation of the two kingdoms and shifted his capital to Kanauj.

CONQUESTS OF HARSHA

According to Hiuen-Tsang, Harsha organised a strong army consisting of 5,000 elephants, 20,000 cavalry and 1,50,000 infantry. He did not have chariots probably because he considered them as useless. Avanti was his Minister of war and peace. Skandagupta was his Commander-in-chief. He was meticulously careful in organising his army because he started his reign with a spirit of revenge -revenge against Sasanka, who was responsible for the murder of Rajyavardhana and brother-in -law Grahavarman and imprisonment of his sister, Rajyasri. With this target in mind he started his *digvijaya,* accompanied by his kinsmen (*Kulaputras*) and feudatories (*Samantas*).

War against Sasanka

Sasanka of Gauda was his first target not only because he had helped Devagupta but also because he was still in possession of Kanauj. On the way, he made his first halt at Saraswati. It was at this place that he met the emissary of Bhaskarvarman of Assam, Hamsavega, who had come with costly presents and proposal of an alliance. It was strategically very significant for Harsha as Assam existed on the other side (east) of Gouda and together they could easily defeat Sasanka. Hence Harsha readily accepted the offer. Together they waged an attack on their common enemy Sasanka. The progress and the result of the campaign are not known. Harshacharita mentions that 'on the approach of Harsha's army, Sasanka, thought 'discretion was better part of valour' and 'beat a masterly retreat'. Hence Kanauj (Malwa) was recovered.

Then Harsha marched towards Karnasuvarna, the capital of Gauda kingdom. Scholars differ in their opinion about the result of the war. Bana's Harshacharita and the accounts of Fa-Hien are silent about it. Some say that Sasanka was defeated and flew away to further east where he continued to rule at least till 619 A.D. Some others say that Sasanka continued to rule with full royal authority till 638 A.D. In any case Harsha annexed Gauda to his kingdom and along with Gauda three other kingdoms, which formed parts of Gauda such as Magadha, Kalinga (Orissa) and Kangoda (Ganjam region) automatically came under his sway. The complete defeat of Sasanka in the hands of Harsha has been derived by scholars from the Niddhanpura Inscription of 629 A.D., wherein Sasanka has not used the title of *Maharajadhiraja* before his name. Hence it is suggested that sometime between 619 A.D. and 629 A.D. Sasanka was defeated. Others say that probably after the death of Sasanka, Harsha conquered Gauda along with Magadha, Utkala and Kangoda. According to Hiuen Tsang after six years of warfare Harsha subjugated 'the five Indies' or the Five Gaudas (according to the Chinese variant) denoting Sravasti (Punjab), Kanyakubja (Uttar Pradesh), Gauda (Bengal), Mithila (Bihar) and Utkala (Orissa).

Five Years' War

With a formidable force, which was constantly on the move Harsha conquered northern India within five and half years. The Chinese pilgrim describes that, 'he went from east to west subduing all who were not obedient, the elephants were not unharnessed nor the soldiers unhelmeted'. Within this five and half years of incessant war he not only conquered a vast territory but his military resources were increased to 60,000 elephants and 1,00, 000 cavalry.

War with Valabhi

Valabhi was a powerful state in the west, which included northern Gujrat and a part of Malwa. The kingdoms of west were hostile to his father. Hence Harsha had inherited a legacy of hostile relationship with these states. The subjugation of the Maitrakas of Valabhi was considered essential, as it was likely to serve as a bulwark against the Chalukyas. In 630 A.D. Harsha fought a war against Dhruvasena II (Dhruvabhatta of Hiuen Tsang) and defeated him. Scholars differ in their views regarding the date of this conquest. After defeating him he occupied the territories of Valabhi, Kutch and Saurashtra. Dhruvasena II flew to Broach. On the request of Dada II, the Gurjara ruler of Broach, Harsha gave his daughter in marriage to Dhruvasena II, and reinstated him on the throne of Valabhi in order to detach him from the orbit of the influence of the Chalukyas. This matrimonial alliance was an act of great political astuteness on Harsha's part as it assured the safety of the western extremity of his empire. In any case Harsha was impressed with the valour of Dhruvasena II and allowed him to continue his rule in a semi-independent capacity.

Harsha-Pulakesin War

The war with Pulakesin-II was by far the most important war fought by Harsha. Having completed his conquest of northern India Harsha diverted his attention towards the Deccan. In the south Pulakesin II of the Chalukya dynasty (Maharastra and Mysore region) was the most powerful ruler. Bana in his Harshacharita refers to the preparation of the war but does not mention anything about the war and its consequences. Hiuen Tsang mentions that Harsha made elaborate preparations to fight this all-important war. Harsha, he says "has gathered troops from five Indies, summoned the best leaders from all countries and himself gone at the head of his army to punish and subdue these people but he has not yet conquered their troops". According to

V.A. Smith if Harsha was the Lord Paramount of north (*Sakalottarapathanath*), Pulakesin II had raised himself to the rank of Lord Paramount of south (*Sakalodakhinapathanatha*). A fierce battle was fought between the two kings the date of which has been differently given by different scholars. V.A. Smith gives the date as 620 A.D. where as Fleet has mentioned it as 609 or 610 A.D. The venue of the battle is also not known. The Aihole Inscription of Pulakesin II of 634 A.D. by poet Ravikirti describes, "Harsha whose lotus-feet were arrayed with the rays of the jewels of the diadems of hosts of feudatories, prosperous with unmeasured mighty through Pulakesin had his joy (Harsha) melted away by fear, having become loathsome with his rows of lordly elephants fallen in the battle". The defeat of Harsha in the hands of Pulakesin-II was magnified in favour of Pulakesin-II in the Chalukyan sources.

It is normally believed that Pulakesin guarded south India on the banks of river Narmada. Hence, after the defeat, Harsha had to accept the river Narmada as his southern frontier and for nearly 600 years no other ruler of north India ventured to conquer south.

War with Sindh

Harsha is said to have led a campaign against the ruler of Sindh. There existed hostility between Pravakarvardhan, the father of Harsha and the king of Sindh. Probably that prompted Harsha to wage a war against Sindh. According to Bana "Harsha pounded the king of Sindh and appropriated his fortune". But there is no conclusive proof of this conquest. From the writings of Hiuen Tsang it is evident that Sindh was an independent kingdom.

Hence Harsha's campaigns against Sindh were either a skirmish or futile.

Kashmir and Nepal

According to Bana, Harsha led and expedition to the inaccessible 'Tushar saila' (snowy mountains) and collected tribute from these lands. Scholars like R.K. Mukherjee and Buhler have identified the inaccessible snowy mountain lands as being Kashmir and Nepal. However, Sylvian Levi has refuted the occupation of Nepal by Harsha. According to Hiuen Tsang Kashmir in a way acknowledged the suzerainty of Harsha as he succeeded in compelling the king of Kashmir to part with a relic of Buddha. Similarly, the Sri Harsha Era was in use in the inscriptions of king Ansuvarman of Nepal. Sylvian Levi says that the mere use of the Era doesn't make Nepal a dependency of Harsha. Since the era was in use in the area during the contemporary period, the king of Nepal might have used it for convenience of one and all. Similarly Rajatarangini of Kalhana, which contains a list of kings of Kashmir, does not mention the name of Harsha.

Conquest of Orissa

Harsha's conquest of parts of Orissa has been established from the accounts of Hiuen Tsang. According to which, Harsha conquered Odra (Wa-tu) and Kangoda of modern Orissa. Odra corresponds to Balasore and Cuttack districts and Kangoda to Ganjam district of Orissa. The conquest of Orissa must have started around 637 A.D. and continued up to 642 A.D. He made repeated efforts to conquer Kangoda. He defeated King Madhavaraja II of Sailodbhava dynasty.

It is said that Harsha conquered Orissa after the death of Sasanka of Gauda.

It is believed that after the conquest of Kangoda, Harsha camped there for sometime and held a conference of the Mahayana Buddhists. Buddhist scholars from Nalanda were invited to the conference. After the conference Harsha offered a Buddhist scholar of Orissa named Jayasena "the revenue of some large towns of Orissa".

Extent of Empire

Controversy rages round the extent of Harsha's empire. Bana and Hiuen Tsang ascribe a vast empire to Harsha. According to Hiuen Tsang, Harsha became the "Lord of Five Indies" (*Panchavarata*). The Five Indies were, Sravasti Mandala, (Punjab), Kanyakubja Mandala (U.P.) Mithila Mandala (Bihar), Gauda Mandala (Bengal) and Odra Mandala (Orissa). The Aihole Inscription of Pulakesin-II describes Harsha as *Sakalottarapathanatha* (Lord of entire north India). However, this term does not give any precise account of the extent of the territory. In any case, the term has been used only to exaggerate his victory over Harsha.

Harsha started with the small kingdom of Thaneswar, then merged it with the kingdom of Kanauj and finally its territory extended from Kashmir in the north to the river Narmada in the south and from Punjab in the west to Bengal and Orissa in the east.

Scholars greatly differ on the extent of the empire of Harsha. Many question his conquest of Kashmir and Nepal. According to R.C. Majumdar the limit of Harsha's empire was much narrower than what is generally believed. According to him his empire was restricted to Thaneswar, Kanauj, eastern Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. Towards the close of his reign he added Magadha and Orissa. It has been said that this was the region, which was directly administered by Harsha. There were some other kingdoms, which came under his influence but were not under his direct administration. His empire sometimes included territories conquered not by force but by alliance and friendship, as were the cases of the kingdoms of Kanauj and Kamarupa.

According to some scholars, "Harsha was the last great empire builder of the Hindu Period and his death marked the end of all successful attempts to restore the political unity of north India".

ADMINISTRATION

Harsha's administration was based on his magnetic personality as well as his benevolent attitude. He not only brought political unity of north India but also established a fine administration over it. Hiuen Tsang was greatly influenced by Harsha's administration and has paid eloquent tribute to him. As an infatigable worker Harsha believed in personal supervision of minute details. According to Hiuen Tsang, Harsha forgot to sleep and to take food in his devotion to good work. The day was too short for him. His sole aim was the welfare of his subjects. His administration was based on benign principles. Since his time was very nearer to Gupta Age, various features of Gupta Administration influenced his administration. Yet, there were new innovations in accordance with the needs of the time. However the spasmodic information given by either Bana or Hiuen

Tsang make it very difficult to draw a complete picture of his administration.

He always liked to have first-hand information about the happenings in the empire. Like Asoka, he believed in travelling as a necessity for a ruler to have first-hand knowledge of the conditions of the people. In order to keep himself in touch with the people he undertook frequent tours of inspection to urban as well as rural areas. These tours exposed the weaknesses of the officers and infused efficiency into bureaucracy. Probably no one in the empire could equal the emperor in his knowledge of different parts. The tours were organised in the manner of state procession accompanied by music and drums. He toured almost throughout the year except the rainy season. During the tours he heard public appeals and punished the evildoers.

The regular five-yearly Assemblies held at Prayag and other such Assemblies organised by subordinate kings and the people, whom he personally attended, provided him scope of coming in contact with the people.

The King

In Harsha's administration the king was the supreme authority who possessed unlimited power. The king had the titles like *Paramabhattaraka, Paramamahesvara, Paramadevata and Maharajadhiraja.* Under divine right theory of kingship he was considered as the God on earth. He appointed all the important officials. He was the fountainhead of justice as well as the supreme commander of the army. In-spite of all his absolute powers Harsha never misused his authority. The welfare of the people was the keynote of his administration. He personally attended to all the state duties. His day was divided into three periods of which one was devoted for the affairs of the government and the other two for religious works.

Mantriparishad

An advisory council called *Mantriparisad* (council of minister) assisted Harsha in the administration. The members of the *Parishad* were known as *Sachivas* or *Amatyas*. Most of the heads of the departments such as army, revenue, public welfare, law and order etc were members of the council. There were some members who acted only as *Mantris* or Counselors. Along with their special qualifications most of the members were expected to posses military skill. The ministers were appointed by the king and were responsible to him. Bhandi was the Prime minister and Avanti was his Minister of War and Peace (*Mahasandhivigrahika*). The other important officers of Harsha's administration were: —

1. *Mahasandhivigrahika*	Ministers of War and Peace
2. *Mahabaladhikrita*	Supreme Commander of Army
3. *Senapati* or *Baladhikrita*	Commander of Army
4. *Brihadasvavara*	Head of Cavalry
5. *Katuka*	Head of Elephant force
6. *Pati*	Superintendent of Soldiers' barracks
7. *Duta*	Ambassador
8. *Rajasthaniya*	In charge of foreign affairs.
9. *Bhogika*	Collector of state share
10. *Mimansaka*	The Judge
11. *Akshapatalika*	Keeper of records

12. *Saivagatah*	In charge of espionage.
13. *Mahapratihara*	Chief Warden.
14. *Yama-Cetis*	Women watchers at night.
15. *Chata Bhata*	Irregular and regular soldiers.
16. *Kumar Amatya*	Ministers of royal blood.

Administrative Divisions

For convenience of administration, Harsha divided his empire into different units. His empire was divided into Bhuktis or Provinces. The Bhuktis were again divided into Vishayas or Districts. The Vishayas were further divided into Pathakas or Tehasils or Taluks. The Pathakas were divided into Gramas or Villages. The villages were the lowest unit of administration. The Provincial administrators were known as Uparika Maharaja or Bhagika or Bhogapati or Rajasthaniya. The head of the district was known as Vishayapati or Ayukta whose office was known as Adhisthana. The district administration had a representative type of Municipal Board known as Adhisthana Adhikarana consisting about twenty members called Vishaya Mahamatras. The head of the village was known as Gramika or Grameyaka or Gramadhyaksha. The village elders or Mahattaras formed an unofficial council to assist the village headman. The Popular Panchayat Courts tried all civil and petty criminal cases. The officers were paid in the form of rent-free lands (Jagir).

Army

The army was an important limb of the state. Harsha harnessed all the resources to make his army a formidable one, so as to enable him conquer a vast empire.

He started with 5,000 elephants, 20,000 cavalry and 50,000 infantry. But in due course he increased it to 60,000 elephants and 1,00,000 infantry. Harsha had no chariots as he considered them as useless.

He took special care of his elephant corps. The elephants were given training to create havoc in the enemy camp. The Officers in the elephant corps were known as *Pilupati* or elephant masters and their chief was known as *Mahapilupati*. The individual trainers were known as *Mahouts*. The corresponding Officers in the Cavalry were known as *Asvapati* and *Maha Asvapati*. Harsha imported pedigree horses from Persia, Afghanistan and Sindh. The footmen were called *Chata-bhata*. According to Hiuen Tsang, Harsha took special care in the recruitment of the soldiers, which was made by public proclamations. Their salary was paid in the form of cash. They were provided with proper training and suitable equipment. The standing army forming the National Guard was recruited from among the soldiers by their valour with which military profession became hereditary. They were usually garrisoned round the palace to protect it. The Officers of the army were called *Mahabaladhikrita, Baladhikrita, Pathipati* (Barrack superintendent) etc. The elderly Skandagupta was his Commander-in-chief.

Revenue Administration

The main source of income of the state was the traditional one sixth of the produce from the land called *Bhaga*. Besides, taxes were collected from the businessmen, from the ferries and barriers. The king was the sole proprietor of mines. So taxes were collected from mines. Money was also collected by way of fines on the culprits and defaulters. There were other taxes as

Tulameya (taxes depending on the weights and measures of commodities), the *Bhaga-bhogakara hiranyadi* (share of the enjoyment or produce). Presents from those who had the occasion to see the king formed a source of income. In general, the taxation policy was liberal.

The income of the state was spent in four ways as stated by Hiuen Tsang. The first part of the income was spent for carrying out the administration of the state, the second for salary of the officials, the third for rewarding men of genius and the fourth for gifts to various sects. Money was the medium of exchange. There were gold and silver coins. However, cowries and pearls were also there.

Judicial Administration

According to Hiuen Tsang, Harsha was a just ruler. He extended justice to all. Unlike the Gupta period, criminal law was very severe. Punishments were very severe. Violent crimes were rare but the roads were exposed to robbers. Hiuen Tsang himself was a victim of highway robbery twice. There was a general deterioration in the moral standards of the people as compared to the Gupta period. Treason against the state or the king or violation of law was punished by life imprisonment. The prisoners were not treated well. Banabhatta mentions that on festive occasions like the birthday of the king some prisoners were, however, released. Mutilation of the nose, ears, hands or feet were inflicted for serious offences. Sometimes the offenders were asked to leave the country. For minor offences fines were imposed. System of trial was crude. Trial by ordeal was in vogue. Ordeals by fire, water or poisons were sometimes adopted to establish innocence or guilt of a person. The severity of punishment acted as a deterrent to violation of law.

Official Records

Harsha created a department of Official Records and Archives, which maintained all official records and recorded all the important public events. The officers like *Akshapatalika* maintained the records.

Works of Public Utility

Social welfare activities constituted the hallmark of Harsha's administration. He promoted agriculture, trade and commerce. Charitable hospitals were established throughout the empire. He constructed new roads, and repaired old ones, which linked important administrative and commercial centres. Inns and rest houses were constructed for the travelers. Arrangement was made for their comforts with provisions for food and drinking water. Harsha dug wells and canals and planted trees on both sides of the road. Hospitals for animals were also provided.

Urban Centres

The centres of prosperity were the cities. Both Bana and Hiuen Tsang not only give a long list of important cities but also have left vivid descriptions of the cities. Bana in his Harshacharita has described the city of Thaneswar. Pataliputra was no longer the premier city of north India. Kanauj, which was the capital of Harsha's empire, took its place. Prayag or Allahabad was also an important city where the Quinquennial Assemblies were held. The other urban centres described by Hiuen Tsang were Nalanda, Mathura, Mayura or Hardwar, Ahichchhatra, Ayodhya, Kausambi, Kapitha or Sankarsna, Varanasi, Champa and Rajamahal or Bihar, Punyavardhana and Samatata in Bengal, Tamralipti in Orissa, Karnasuvarna in Bengal, Kamarupa in Assam etc.

Bana has elaborately described the city of Thaneswar, where as the city of Kanauj has received similar attention from Hiuen Tsang. According to Bana the royal palace of Thaneswar was a grand structure with beautiful decorations. "It resounded with sounds of triumph, booming of dreams, songs of troubadours and minstrels and bustle of business". There were four courtrooms, which were large enough to accommodate seas of elephants and horses on festive occasions. There were a number of pleasure ponds at different places. The royal palace was an embodiment of pomp and luxury. The principal street of the city was the Buzar Street.

The city of Kanauj, which was originally built by Maukharis, grew tremendously under Harsha. As the capital of Harsha it reached the status of the premier city of north India supplanting Pataliputra. It was converted into a well-fortified city of nearly 8 km (20 li) long and 2 km (5 li) broad. There were more than 100 Buddhist monasteries with around 10,000 Brethren belonging to both the sects of Buddhism. There were also a large number of Hindu temples. The town was well planned and the houses were on the whole clean, comfortable and simple. Hiuen Tsang pays glowing tribute to the behaviour of the citizens. The people were gentle, rich and prosperous. Their speeches were explicit and correct and their expressions were harmonious and elegant like those of the Devas (Gods).

Bana called the architects as *Grihachintakas*. The cities were enclosed within quadrangular walls, broad and high. The architecture of the public buildings was 'most remarkable'. To Hiuen Tsang the thoroughfares appeared as narrow but in other respects the town planning followed certain principles. Shops were placed on the highways. Persons following unclean or disreputable occupations such as butchers, scavengers, public performers etc. had to live outside the city. In any case the architecture of the cities and the method of town planning adopted by them indicate the high degree of economic progress of the period.

RELIGION

Hiuen Tsang gives an admirable report on the moral and material progress of India during the period of his visit. The very visit of the Chinese pilgrim was a testimony to the moral progress and the greatness achieved by India. It was not a mere pleasure trip. He came on a sacred and spiritual mission as a seeker of knowledge over which India then had the monopoly. The pilgrimages of Fa-Hien, Hiuen Tsang, I-tsing etc. of China to India was a tribute paid by China to the sovereignty of India's thought whose influence extended beyond the geographical boundaries of India and created a Greater India far and wide.

India was preeminently a land of temples on which all her different religions appear to agree, inspite of their differences in doctrines and deities. Hiuen Tsang describes the existence of the Deva temples along with Buddhist Viharas and other monuments in every city.

Much of the moral and religious progress of the country was of course bound up to some extent with the character and example shown by the reigning sovereigns. Harsha was an example to his people in his pursuit and patronage of religion and learning.

Harsha did not inherit Buddhism. While Pushyabhuti, the founder of the dynasty was an ardent devotee of Siva his father was a worshiper of Sun God (Aditya). There were worshippers of Chandi and Mahakala among the citizens. His elder brother Rajyavardhan was a Buddhist. Harsha himself started as a devotee of Siva. Bana says that before setting out on his conquests he offered worship to Rudra Siva (Nila-Lohita). Thus, Brahmanical religion and culture by and large pervaded the palace. In his earlier days he had the title of *Paramamaheswara*, a worshipper of Siva. In his own writings like Ratnavali and Priyadarsika the benedictory verses refer to the chief duties of Hinduism. Even in the Buddhist drama of Nagananda, which begins with an invocation to Buddha-Jina, the Brahmanical deities like Gouri and Garuda have been given important places.

In his later years Harsha favoured Mahayana form of Buddhism. According to Bana his conversion into Buddhism is attributed to the Buddhist ascetic Divakara Mitra who helped him in tracing his sister Rajyasri in the Vindhya Mountains. The inscriptions describe his elder brother as the first convert of the family to the Buddhism and describe him as a Paramasaugata, i.e. a prime devotee of Buddha. But it is generally believed that Harsha embraced Buddhism perhaps due to brilliant expositions by Hiuen Tsang and the influence of his Buddhist sister, Rajyasri. He showed his predilection for Mahayana Buddhism by his forcible appropriation of the Tooth Relic of Buddha from Kashmir, and its subsequent enshrinement in a *Sangharama* in Kanauj.

After embracing Buddhism Harsha summoned annual religious assemblies of Buddhist monks, constructed Buddhist monasteries, prohibited the slaughter of animals, erected hospices (*Punyasalas*) on high ways for free supply of food and medicines to travelers and poor persons alike. He himself gave up eating meat. He granted the revenue of 80, large towns to Jayasena, a famous Buddhist scholar of Orissa. He made liberal grants for the promotion of Buddhist learning and culture of the Nalanda University.

Though he accepted Buddhism at a later date yet like Asoka he was respectful to all religions. He followed a policy of religious toleration. The construction of temples as well as Buddhist monasteries symbolises his liberalism in matters of worship. He granted freedom of worship to all his subjects. That is why although Buddhism enjoyed royal patronage in Kanauj it could not make much headway in other parts. He made generous gifts to the Buddhists and the Hindus as well. The eclectic character of his religion was probably due to his desire to win universal popularity from all sections of his subjects as well as divine support for honouring the principal Gods of different religions. We have the testimony of Hiuen Tsang that in the Assembly at Prayaga, Harsha worshipped the image of Buddha on the first day, the image of Sun on the second day and that of Siva on the third day symbolise synthesis of religions. In his pursuit of religion he did not begin as a Buddhist, nor did he as a Buddhist, only patronised Buddhism to the exclusion of all other religions in a narrow spirit of sectarianism, which was unbecoming of an emperor like Harsha.

The Assembly at Kanauj

Great as was Harsha as a ruler and conqueror, he was greater still in the arts of peace that 'hath her victories no less renowned than war'. Harsha held a special religious Assembly at Kanauj in honour of Hiuen Tsang in 643 A.D. Twenty Kings and Feudatory Chiefs including Bhaskarvarman of Assam and Dhruvasena II of Valabhi attended it. The Mahayana doctrines were propagated here with utmost precision. Around 3,000 Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhist monks, 3,000 Hindu and Jaina scholars and about 1,000 scholars from the Nalanda University participated in the deliberations. On the banks of the river Ganga, a special monastery of about 100 feet high was built to house a golden image of Buddha of the size of the king inside it. Two thatched halls were built to accommodate the participants.

The Assembly continued for 23 days. Every day the proceedings of the Assembly started with a huge and solemn procession in which a golden statue of Buddha about 1 meter high was carried on a gorgeously caparisoned elephant. Harsha led the procession followed by Bhaskaravarman dressed in the guise of Sakra (Indra) and Brahma respectively. It is said that the king carried in person the canopy over the statue of the Buddha. They were followed by 18 other kings, princes, priests and officials on elephants. As the procession moved along, Harsha scattered pearl, gold and other precious substances in honour of the three Jewels Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. After the termination of the procession, Harsha performed ceremonial worship and gave public dinner. This being over, every one assembled in the hall to discuss deep philosophical principles of religion with Hiuen Tsang as the "Lord of discussion" (President). He gave discourses on the merits of Mahayana Buddhism and invoked those present to dispute his arguments. But none came forward and he remained undisputed for five days.

For various reasons a conspiracy developed at Kanauj against Harsha and Hiuen Tsang. It is said that the Brahmins felt insulted as Harsha and Bhaskaravarman in the guise of Indra and Brahma were in attendance upon the image of Buddha, which exhibited the subservience of Hindu Gods to Buddha. Even in the fold of Buddhism he showed special interest in the Mahayanism. The Hinayanas were denied freedom of speech in the Assembly by an angry proclamation as, "Whoever speaks against him his tongues shall be cut". Though the royal proclamation was provoked by a plot engineered by the opponents to kill Hiuen Tsang and Harsha yet this proclamation had the effect of reducing what began as a Parliament of Indian religions into a mere sectarian Assembly. The followers of other sects thereafter withdrew and disappeared. It is also believed that resentment grew up because, the king 'exhausted his treasury in offerings to the Sramanas'. Harsha issued a stern warning to the opponents when he came to know of the plot, threatening with instant death to any one who should cause any harm to the honoured guest. The announcement had its desired effect. For rest of the eighteen days there was no one to oppose him in the debate. However, on the last day the great tower suddenly caught fire, which was considered as the culmination of the resentment by the opposition. When the plot to assassinate Harsha was unearthed, out of despair Harsha dissolved the Assembly and got five hundred Brahmins arrested and deported. To the rest he extended mercy.

The Prayaga Assembly

When the special Assembly at Kanauj broke up amidst tragic circumstances Harsha invited Hiuen Tsang to witness his sixth and last quinquennial distribution of alms (*Mahamoksha Parishad*) at Prayaga, the sacred confluence of Ganga and Yamuna in 643 A.D. Despite his emotional urge to return home Hiuen Tsang agreed to witness the unique function which was attended by twenty kings including Bhaskaravarman and Dhruvasena II and a vast concourse of people amounting to about half a million Sramanas, Heretics, Nigranthas, the poor, the orphans, and the bereaved of the 'Five Indies' who had been summoned by an imperial decree. The 'great distribution arena' was the immense sand plain on the riverbanks. The proceedings opened with an impressive procession of all kings and continued for seventy-five days.

The Assembly at Prayaga was not like that of Kanauj, a special Assembly summoned in the interest of a particular religion. It was a regular institution holding its sessions every five years. All classes, castes, creeds and communities shared the king's openhanded liberality though precedence was given to the Buddhists in the order of distribution.

On this occasion Harsha gave proof of his eclectic bent of mind by honouring the Brahmanical deities. On the first day the image of Buddha was set up in a temporary shrine and was honoured by costly offerings and lavish distributions. On the second day the image of Sun (Aditya) was worshipped. On the third day the image of Siva was worshipped. But in both the cases the gifts bestowed were half the amount of those consecrated to the Buddha on the opening day. On the fourth day generous gifts were given to the Buddhist monks. Next twenty days were devoted for donations to the Brahmanas. Then ten days were spent for gifts to the

Jainas (heretics) and members of others sects. The same number of days was spent for giving alms to the Mendicants. It took one month to bestow charity to the poor, the orphans and the destitutes.

This exhausted the accumulated treasures of Harsha. He even gave away his personal gems and other belongings including clothing, so that he had to beg of his sister a garment for his own use. Thus, he established a record of individual liberality, hardly equaled in history.

The accounts of the two Assemblies show that unlike Asoka who publicly preached in his edicts universal religion based on morality, instead of his own personal faith in Buddhism, Harsha was more anxious to preach his personal faith of Mahayana Buddhism in a spirit of intolerance, which often provoked open hostility. However, his unbounded generosity and charity overshadowed all other things. A true estimate of Harsha's character does not depict him as a Buddhist. He served other communities or the general public equally well.

PATRONAGE OF LEARNING

One of the claims of Harsha to remembrance rests on his liberal patronage of learning. According to Hiuen Tsang, Harsha used to earmark one fourth of the state revenue for rewarding men of intellectual distinctions. He generously assigned, "the revenue of eighty large towns of Orissa" to a noted Buddhist scholar named Jayasena who however, thankfully declined the tempting offer. Harsha also made munificent endowments to Nalanda, the great centre of Buddhist learning.

Harsha himself was a man of learning and culture. Bana credits him with original poetic skill and wide learning. I-tsing who visited India after Harsha's death gives him the credit of writing the play called Nagananda wherein he versified the story of Bodhisattva Jimutavahana. The play was performed by a group of people by dancing and acting which popularised it. I-tsing carried the drama to China, which was performed in the theatres of China and Japan at a later date. Bana gives him the credit of writing two more dramas Priyadarsika and Ratnavali. Eminent Sanskrit scholars have rated Harsha's literary potentiality with that of Bhasa and Kalidas. Thus he was considered as a poet king in the line of Samudragupta, Chandragupta, Vikramaditya, Bhoja etc. He is also given the credit of preparing a grammatical work. Two Sanskrit poems of Buddhist context (in praise of Buddha) have been attributed to Harsha. One of these called the Suprabhat Stotra, a hymn mentions Harsha's name in the colophon. Hiuen Tsang attributes the other one to Siladitya (Harsha). Besides, the inscriptions on both Banskhera and Madhubana Plates are supposed to have been composed by him as they bear his signatures. They represent fine poetic style. He was also an expert on calligraphy. His signatures on the two inscriptions contain elaborately ornamented characters.

As a patron of learning, Harsha attracted many scholars to his court. Scholars like Banabhatta, Divakara, Mayura, Bhartrihari, Haridutta and Jayasena adorned his court. Banabhatta the author of Harshacharita, Kadambari, Chandisataka and Parvatiparinaya was the most distinguished of his literary proteges. Mayura composed Suryasataka.

Nalanda University (*Mahavihar*)

Harsha was a patron of the University of Nalanda, which by that time was the greatest centre of Buddhist learning. It was situated near Rajagriha (Rajgir) in the district of Nalanda in Bihar. Harsha is said to have granted the revenue of 100 villages for the endowment of this university. According to Hiuen Tsang Harsha constructed a splendid *Vihara* of about 100-ft high near the main establishment of the Nalanda University. It was covered with brass plates. He also built a bronze temple nearby.

It was an institution of advanced postgraduate studies, which attracted scholars from countries like China, Japan, Ceylon and Tibet. Hiuen Tsang himself lived there for five years from 635 to 640 A.D. He studied Yoga under Silabhadra who was the Chancellor of the University. According to him there were around 10,000 scholars who were taught by 1500 teachers.

The subjects of study were Brahmanical and Buddhist, sacred and secular, humanities and science, and arts and crafts. Vedas, logic, grammar, medicine, Yoga etc. were also taught there. The University had the distinction of having teachers like Silabhadra, Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Asanga, Vasubandhu and Dinnaga at different periods. There were other teachers like Dharmapala, Gunamati, Sthiramati, Pravamitra, Jinamitra and Jinachandra during the time of Harsha. Teaching was carried on by lectures, discussions, questioning and answering verbally. Admission to the university was done through an entrance examination, which was very stiff. The examiners were called Doorkeepers (*Dvara Panditas*). The rate of success in the entrance examinations was less than 20%.

Nalanda stood for the ideal of freedom of learning and welcomed knowledge from all quarters, from all sects and creeds. It was a genuine university in the universal range of studies. Harsha honoured the scholars of the university as best as he could. He invited 1,000 learned scholars from Nalanda to his Kanauj Assembly to take part in the discussions.

Sri Harsha Era

Harsha is given the credit of initiating a new era as *Harshavda* commencing from October 606 A.D., the date of his accession. The era was probably in use even long after his death. About twenty inscriptions dated in the Harsha era are known. Alberuni refers to have come across in a Kashmiri calendar that Sri Harsha, who came 664 years after Vikramaditya of Vikram Samvat era i.e. 58 B.C., started an era. This puts *Harshavda* in 606 A.D. In any case there is no reliable evidence in support of the starting of Harsha era.

HIUEN TSANG (YUAN CHWANG)

630 A.D. – 645 A.D.

Hiuen Tsang was a Chinese Buddhist Pilgrim who visited India during the reign of Harsha. He has been described as the 'prince of the pilgrims' and the Chinese 'master of law'. Many foreign travelers have visited India but the accounts left by Hiuen Tsang give the details of political religious and social condition of the contemporary period. The history of Harsha remains incomplete without reference to Hiuen Tsang. His writings have been published in a book form called Si-Yu-Ki (The Records of the Western World), which is almost a history of India for 15 years. Beal and Watters have translated it into English. His biography written by Hwli-li, called 'The Life' is another valuable source on the Indian history.

Hiuen Tsang was born in 600 A.D. He became a Buddhist at the age of twenty. His spiritual hunger brought him to India to study Buddhist philosophy. Starting in 629 A.D. he reached India in 630 A.D. passing through Khotan, Pamir and Samarqand. He stayed in India upto 645 A.D. and visited almost every part of India. He visited Kashmir, Punjab, Kapilavastu, Bodhgaya, Varanasi, Saranath, Kushinagar, Kamarup, Bengal, Orissa, Andhra, Kanchi, Badami and a number of other places. He studied at Nalanda University for five years.

Harsha was greatly influenced by him. For his deep devotion to Buddhism he stayed at Kanauj as his special guest for eight years. He presided over the Kanauj Assembly and attended the Prayag Assembly.

He returned back to China in 644 A.D. and reached home in 645 A.D. He took with him from India 150 pieces of relics of Buddha, a large number of the Buddha images in gold, silver and sandalwood and above all 657 volumes of valuable manuscripts on 20 horses. He spent rest of his life in translating 74 of these manuscripts into the Chinese language.

Harsha's relation with China

According to the Chinese historian, Ma-twan-lin in his work Hsin-Tang-Shu, Harsha had friendly relation with China when he was at the height of his political power as the country showed keen interest in Buddhism. He deputed an ambassador to the court of the Chinese emperor Tai-Tsung in 641 A.D. In return the Chinese emperor sent an envoy, Liang Huai-Chig with a patent urging upon Harsha to submit to the Chinese Emperor. Harsha accepted it with bent knees and placed it on his head. It is said that some serious trouble at home compelled Harsha to submit to the Chinese authority. Some other scholars reject the idea of submission, as Harsha was not likely to attain any benefit from such a distant country. Six other missions, three from each side were exchanged between the years 641 A.D. to 647 A.D.

HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Sources of information on Harsha are plenty. Harshacharita of Banabhatta, accounts of Chinese Pilgrim, Hiuen Tsang and a series of inscriptions provide information on his reign.

Harsha was a great ruler who stood at the threshold of Indian middle ages. He was the last great empire builder of the Hindu period and his death marked the end of political unity of north India. He has been described as the *Sakalottaropathanath* (Lord of the entire northern India). Unfortunately he had no interaction with the Deccan as he was defeated by Pulakesin-II at the gateway to the south.

The high standard of classical Sanskrit culture at his court and the generous patronage bestowed on Hindu and Buddhist religious institutions alike revive the memories of the Golden Age. He distinguished himself equally in the art of peace and war. He could wield the pen as well as the sword. His own writings testify his literary skill and earned him the title of poet king. Eminent Sanskrit scholars like Banabhatta and Mayura graced his court.

The political centre of power shifted from Pataliputra to Kanauj. Harsha's religious Assemblies at Kanauj and Prayaga were events of scholarly discussions. Though he patronised Buddhism he followed a policy of religious Catholicism and respected all religions. His patronage of Nalanda University made it the greatest centre of learning in ancient India.

The socio-economic condition of India during his time was remarkably satisfactory. The people lived a happy and prosperous life. Number of urban centres developed. Industrial life was organised on the basis of caste and larger corporations or guilds.

According to R.K. Mukharjee, "He was at once a prince and a poet, a warrior and a man of letters, royal and kindly, with unbounded wealth given away in unbounded liberality, with the dignity of a paramount sovereign joined to the humility of a beggar, master of all military as well as fine arts, of all knowledge and virtues".

The size and splendour of his empire makes one believe that he established an empire as great as that of the Guptas. The Guptas didn't have rivals in India whereas Harsha faced many rivals and yet succeeded.

Chapter - 9

THE ARAB INVASION OF SINDH

According to Sir Wolseley Haig, "the rise of Islam is one of the marvels of history". Islam grew up in the deserts of Arabia and its first converts; the Arabs made it a powerful force in the politics of the world. Later the Persians and the Turks took up the cause of Islam and further strengthened it.

Prophet Mohammed died in 632 A.D. (570-632 A.D.). He pleaded the propagation Islam by both peace and war. Hence Islam began to spread by propagation as well as by force from the very beginning. Islam inspired a warlike spirit among its converts for which the Arabs decided to spread their new religion by way of a world conquest. Within a period of less than three centuries the Arabs established a vast empire, which extended from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the river Indus in the east, from Caspian Sea in the north to the Nile Valley in the south.

The religious chiefs of Islam after Prophet Mohammed were called Khalifa (Caliph). Abu Bakr was the first Khalifa after the death of Prophet Mohammed. As the head of Islamic faith he was also elected as the head of the state. He was a Sunni Muslim and his family was called **Umayyad**. The Shia Muslims, under the **Abbasid** family took over the authority of the Khalifa in 750 A.D. from the Umayyads. The Khalifa continued to be the formal head of the Islamic world and the faith till the abolition of the title by the British government after the First World War. During the Umayyad period the Arabs invaded India.

The advent of Islam is usually regarded as the dividing line between the ancient and medieval periods of Indian history. The invasion of Muslims as signalised by the Arab invasion of Sindh, however, hardly caused any stir. It was considered as a **passing phase** without any difference from other foreign invasions on the Indian soil. There elapsed a gap of nearly five centuries between the Arab invasion of Sindh and the Muslim rule in Delhi.

Political Condition of North India

Harsha was the last great ruler of India. His death marked the end of political unity in India. There was no paramount ruler to protect the imperial authority of India. North India was divided into several **independent kingdoms** such as Magadha, Kanauj, Kashmir, Nepal, Assam, Bengal, Orissa, Vallavi, Gurjara, Pratihar and other Rajput dynasties. Afghanistan, which formed a part of India since the period of the Maurya dynasty, was known by the two regional names of Kabul and Jabul.

The lower Indus Valley to the South of Multan including Sindh and Mekran comprised an independent kingdom during the time of Harsha. The Persian invaders killed its Sudra ruler Shaira, a contemporary of Harsha. His son Raisahasi succeeded him. His Brahmin minister Chach, killed his master, married the widowed queen and usurped the throne. The Jats who were Buddhists dominated the population. **Dahir** a son of Chach ascended the throne in 708 A.D. The capital of Sindh was at Alor (modern Rohri). In any case India at that particular time was divided into many kingdoms, which constantly fought against each other. Their disunity, however, was to such an extent that when the Arab invasion knocked at door instead of uniting, many of them welcomed it and supported it against other rulers.

CAUSES

Economic

There was close link of **trade and commerce** between the Arab and India from the very beginning. The Arabs were practically carriers of Indian trade between India and the west for centuries. The **Arabian horses** were in great demand in India and were imported by Indian rulers in large numbers. **Cotton** was the most important item of export from west coast of India to Europe. The Indian carpas was given the name 'quiun' by the Arab traders who carried it to different European ports. From the word 'quiun' the word cotton has come. The Indian rulers and the people accorded generous treatment to the Arab traders as they helped India's material progress. However the flourishing trade at a particular stage made the Arabs think of taking over the trade by themselves, instead of acting as carriers. Hence they cast their eyes on the ports of west coast of India.

Plunder of wealth was another important aspect of Arab invasion of Sindh. Their contact with Persia gave them some idea about the fabulous wealth of India stored particularly in the temples. Hence their desire to enrich themselves with plunder brought them to India.

Rise of Islam

During the time when Harsha was propagating Buddhism in India, Prophet Muhammad was preaching his new religion, Islam to the Arabs. Before Islam the Arabs not only believed in many Gods but their morals were very low. Prophet Muhammad preached Islam by force. Hence after conversion into Islam the Arabs cast their covetous eyes on vast India. Though trade and commerce continued to be the main attraction for many, yet the Arabian government and the people as a whole cherished the desire of conquering India for the **propagation of Islam**.

Cultural

The conquest of Sindh was merely a part of their design to conquer entire India. The Arabs were deeply influenced by Indian culture and civilization. The wisdom, administrative acumen and the high moral character of the Indians with whom they came in close contact through western trade attracted them. Hence they took the pretext of propagation of religion and tried to conquer India for their material and moral prosperity.

Immediate Cause

The invasion of 711 A.D. was caused by the failure of the ruler of Sindh to make reparation for some Arab ships plundered by pirates off the coast of Sindh. It is believed that the king of Sri Lanka had sent to Al Hajjaj, the governor of Iraq, some orphan daughters of the Muslim merchants who had died in his kingdom, as **slaves for the Khalifa**. These ships also carried valuable presents from the king of Sri Lanka to the Khalifa. The ships were plundered by pirates off the coast of Debal near Thatta. The Khalifa demanded reparation from Dahir the ruler of Sindh. Dahir refused to pay any **compensation** on the grounds that the pirates were not under his control for which he was not liable for payment. Hence, the invasion started.

However the Arabs have been making repeated attempts since 636-37 A.D. to conquer Sindh. In 636 A.D. a naval expedition was sent by Khalifa Omar to conquer Thana near Bombay, which failed. Another attempt was made in 644 A.D. by land through Makran into western Sindh. This attempt was made on the orders of Khalifa Osman. Abdullah-bin-Amar was the leader of the expedition. The expedition succeeded, the rulers of Makran and Sindh were defeated yet the conquerors returned back without annexing Sindh. It was reported to Khalifa, "water is scarce, the fruits are poor, the rubbers are bold; if a few troops are sent they will be slain, if many they will starve". Attempts were made in 659, 662, 664 A.D. etc to conquer Sindh, all of which failed. The attempt of 711 A.D. however was successful.

THE INVASION

In 711 A.D. Al Hajjaj, the governor of Iraq deputed his son-in-law, Muhammad-bin-Qasim, a young and ambitious general to launch an attack on Sindh with the permission of Khalifa Walid. Muhammad-bin-Qasim's troops included 6,000 select Syrian soldiers and heavy materials consisting of balistas or majniqs (catapult) that threw stone balls. Out of ignorance, lethargy and complacency Dahir remained silent for quite sometime and Muhammad-bin-Qasim conquered the **city of Debal**. During the war a Brahmin from the temple deserted Dahir and informed the enemy the key to success i.e. the red flag on the temple. As long as the flag remained flying, he cannot be defeated. Hence he directed his balistas towards it and destroyed it. The inhabitants of the city were mercilessly slaughtered for three days and the conqueror "settled 400 Muslim colonists in the city and built a mosque for them". Then he proceeded to **Nirun** (about 120 km north east of Debal) and captured it without much resistance. The Buddhists of Nirun gave him active assistance. Similarly Sehwan also fell without much resistance once again because of the treachery of the Buddhists. Then fell Sisan on the Kumbha.

Proceeding along the west Bank of river Indus he reached **Rawar,** the **headquarters of Dahir** and encamped on the West Bank of the river for nearly two months. During this period the army of Muhammad-bin-Qasim was considerably weakened due to an attack of scurvy, which reduced the number of his horses. In the mean time Mokah and his brother, two vassals of Dahir joined Muhammad-bin-Qasim. He was further strengthened by the dispatch of 2000 picked cavalry and a powerful Jat regiment from Seistan. Finally, he crossed the river and fought against Dahir on 20th June 712 A.D. for two days. The army of Dahir consisting of 50,000 horses was making good progress when as ill luck would have it, an arrow struck at Dahir, mounted on an elephant and killed him. After his death his son Jai Singh retreated to Brahmanabad. However Dahir's wife, queen Rani Bai gave a spirited resistance but when she saw not a single ray of hope she performed *Jauhar* alongwith other ladies of the palace to save their honour.

After capturing Rawar he proceeded towards Brahmanabad. Jai Singh resisted for six months but finally fell due to the treachery of his Chief Minister and some other leading citizens of the fort. Muhammad occupied the town with its treasures and valuables including Rani Ladi, another widow of Dahir and his maiden daughters Sura Devi and Parmar Devi. Jayasingh now retreated to Alor the capital of Sindh. This too was captured by Muhammad-bin-Qasim. The last step in the conquest of Sindh was Multan, which also fell due to the treachery of his fellow men who showed him the stream of water supply to the fort which he cut off. This ancient town with its enormous wealth was occupied in

713 A.D. and the usual ghastly scene of slaughter and the enslavement followed.

CAUSES FOR THE DEFEAT OF SINDH

Divided Society

A number of causes contributed for the Arab occupation of Sindh. Sindh was internally **disunited and divided** into four provinces. The Governors of these provinces were independent or semi-independent for which the united resistance could not be given. The population of the kingdom was **heterogeneous**. The Hindus formed the major chunk of the population, yet there were Jainas and Buddhists in considerable number. In the society the low caste people like the Jats and Meds were badly treated. Owing to these circumstances there was no solidarity among the people. The people did not offer their wholehearted support to the ruler at the time of need.

Unpopular Ruler

Dahir as a ruler was not very popular. He was the son of **Chach** who had **usurped** the throne. So he was considered as an outsider. The Buddhists and some of his Hindu chiefs supplied Muhammad valuable information and often joined his army. The traders refused to fight and betrayed the king to avoid war, as otherwise their business would be affected. But unfortunately none of them could foresee that they were helping Islam, a new religion whose primary aim was to suppress other religions. Nevertheless **defection and treachery** were important causes for the fall of Sindh.

Economic Condition

Sindh was a poor kingdom with no potentiality to support a vast army or finance a long war with a superior enemy. In contrast the Arab army was not only well equipped but was very large in number.

Weak Rulers

When Muhammad bin Qasim was a towering genius, Dahir was incompetent, lethargic and a total failure as a leader. He **failed to plan his movements properly**. Instead of giving resistance at the entry point near Debal he waited till Muhammad penetrated deep as for as Rawar. The victories in a way strengthened Muhammad's army. Sindh was isolated from rest of India for quite some time. Hence, when an outsider attacked it no other Indian kingdom came forwarded to support. When the Arabs were inspired by religious convictions with a desire to spread the religion (Jihad) the soldiers of Sindh were not inspired by any such ideology.

Faulty Strategy

Finally, the **lack of strategy** on the part of Dahir brought him defeat. He allowed Muhammad to cross the river Sindh on the borders of Rawar without any resistance. He himself participated in the battle like a common soldier for which a single arrow aimed at his heart not only killed him but also brought the fall of his army.

DEATH OF MUHAMMAD BIN QASIM

The triumphant career of Muhammad-bin-Qasim was cut-short by political vicissitudes at home. Al Hajjaj died in June 714 A.D. The Khalifa Walid died in 715 A.D. The new Khalifa Suleiman was a sworn enemy of Al Hajjaj and wreaked vengeance on the members of his family.

The fall of Muhammad was as sudden as his meteoric rise. The chroniclers relate that two captive daughters of Dahir, Parimal Devi and Suraj Devi were presented to the Khalifa to be inducted in to his harem. But the two princesses in order to avenge the death of their father invented a story and informed the Khalifa that Muhammad had dishonoured them both. The Khalifa lost his temper and ordered that Muhammad be sewn in the raw hide of an ox and be sent to the capital. His order was carried out resulting in the death of Muhammad. It is mentioned in the Futuhu-i-Buldan that the Khalifa put him in chains and he died in a prison due to torture. After the death of Muhammad, the two princesses told the Khalifa that Muhammad was innocent. The Khalifa was struck with remorse but by then Muhammad was already dead. He ordered the princess to be tied to the tails of horses and dragged until they were dead.

AFTERMATH

The Arabs failed to draw a balance between military conquest and effective occupation. The task of ruling over Sindh became difficult after Muhammad-bin-Qasim. Jai Singh wrested Brahmanabad and Alor from the Arab Chiefs. This had to be once again recaptured by an Arab General Habib. The next Khalifa thought it prudent to offer autonomy to the local chiefs if they embraced Islam. Many chiefs including Jai Singh accepted the offer and were reinstated. But within a few years once again he revolted and reverted back to Hinduism. However he was defeated and imprisoned by the Arab general Junaid. Thus ended the dynasty of Dahir and independence of Sindh. Thereafter the Arabs under Junaid tried to enter into other parts of India and proceeded as far as Malwa in the east and Broach in the south. But they were effectively defeated by the Pratihara king Nagabhatta I and the Chalukya ruler of Gujrat Pulakesi and were driven back to Sindh.

Thus the Arabs could establish their authority only over the frontier region of the lower Indus. The Indian rulers of 9th and 10th centuries were powerful enough to repel the Arab efforts beyond Sindh. Even in Sindh itself their position was precarious.

ARAB ADMINISTRATION IN SINDH

The conquered province was divided into a number of districts (*iqtas*) held by Arab nobility on condition of military service. Some soldiers were given land grants and some others were paid fixed salary. Religious endowments were made and land was given in waqf (free gift) to holymen.

The land tax and the Jiziya formed the principal source of the revenue. The rate of land tax was 2/5 on irrigated land and 1/5th on non-irrigated land on produce. There was another type of tax collected from highest bidders.

The judiciary was not well organised. The nobles generally tried all cases and inflicted punishments. The Qazis also heard cases and decided on the principles of Quran without any distinction of Hindus and Muslims. Rather the Hindus were often discriminated. The panchayats also continued to exist which settled local cases.

EFFECTS

Promising beginning

According to Stanley Lanepoole, "The Arabs had conquered Sindh but the conquest was only an episode in the history of India and Islam, a triumph without results". Sindh remained under Arab occupation for more than 150 years. The Arabs were not as fanatical as the Turks who followed them. They came with a desire to conquer entire India and to propagate Islam. But the same Arabs who had a glorious record of conquests elsewhere failed to penetrate beyond the frontiers of India, i.e. Sindh and Multan. They failed to face the organised opposition from the Indians.

Religious Co-existence

The conquest naturally began with the destruction of the temples, plunder of the wealth and persecution of the unbelievers. But very soon they realised that Hinduism was too deeply entrenched in the soil to be removed by ordinary efforts. Hence, the Arabs adopted a liberal policy towards the Hindus. The matter was rationalised by Al-Hajjaj when he said, "....as the Hindus have made submission and have agreed to pay taxes to the Khalifa nothing more can be expected from them. They have been taken under our protection and we cannot in any way stretch out our hands upon their lives and property. Permission is given to them to worship their Gods. No body must be forbidden or prevented from following his religion".

Muhammad bin Qasim also granted toleration to all unbelievers and declared, ".....the temples shall be inviolate like the churches of the Christians, the synods of the Jews and the uttars of Maginas". The officers of the government were instructed to deal honestly with the people, 'and if distribution is required make it equity'. However, this laid the foundation of Islam in India, which at a later date succeeded in becoming a major religion in the country. The Arab settlements in Sindh and Multan made Islam cause some impact or the other on the Indian religious life. In due course many Indians accepted Islam. The Arabs rapidly assimilated local customs and manners. In 886 A.D. the Quran was translated in to Sindhi on the request of a Hindu chief.

Social Effects

The Arab soldiers settled in the county and married Indian women. This gave rise to the development of a number of military colonies. The most important colonies in Sindh were Multan, Mansura, Kujdar, Kandabel, Baiza and Mahfuza. These colonies became centers of trade and learning and a new social equation developed.

Influence on Arabs

As the other side of the coin, the Arabs were also greatly influenced by the culture and civilization of India. They were overwhelmed to see the superiority of the Indian civilization. The sublimity of Hindu philosophical ideas and the rich and versatile intellect were a strange revelation to the Arabs. The cardinal doctrines of Muslim theology i.e. the Indians already knew the existence of one God. Hence, instead of influencing, the Arab scholars were themselves influenced.

Storehouse of Knowledge

Ibn Ali Hatim relates on Ali's (4th Caliph) authority that the valley of Hind where Adam descended from heaven and the valley of Mecca, which had the tradition of Abraham, were the two best valleys of the world. According to Ali India was the land where books were first written and from where wisdom and knowledge sprang. Some Sanskrit words found their way into the Quran and the vice versa. Some of the India's best known works as Panchatantra, Hitopadesa etc. were translated into Arabic and then into other languages. The Caliph Mansur invited many Hindu scholars to the court of Baghdad.

Indian Medicine

The Indian physicians and their medical system enjoyed a prominent place at the Caliph's court. Indian medicinal works like Susruta and Charakasamhita were translated into the Arabic. Manaka an Indian physician cured the Caliph Harun al Rashid of a serious disease. Manaka remained at Baghdad and translated several books from Sanskrit to Arabic. The Caliph al Mamun it is said felt so fascinated by the Indian works on medicine that he made arrangements for a scholar to read him out some passages from these works. A mission was sent to India to collect information on the medicinal herbs.

Astronomy

Equally profound was the influence of Indian astronomy. The celebrated Indian astronomical work Suryasidhanta of Aryabhatta was translated into the Arabic under the name of Sindhind. The other astronomical works translated into the Arabic included the works of Varahamihir (Brihatsamhita) and Brahmagupta (Brahma Sidhanta and Khanda Khandyaka).

Mathematics

In the field of mathematics the concept of trigonometry and the Arabic numerals (1,2,3 etc), which the Europeans learnt from the Arabs were borrowed by the Arabs from India and were known as Arkanal-Hindi.

Music and Painting

The Arab scholars learnt form the Indians music, painting, architecture etc., which they later passed on to the Europeans. The Indian scientists like Bhala, Bazigar (Bijayakar), and travelers like Sindbad acquired great fame at the court of Baghdad and have been frequently mentioned in the Arabic works.

Administration

The Arabs learnt from India a great deal of art of administration. The sudden intellectual awakening and great devotion to learning among the Arabs is attributed to the universities of northwestern India.

WAS IT JIHAD ?

Some scholars have questioned it whether the Arab invasion of Sindh was inspired by religion? According to Dr. Tarachand it was not. He points out that many Hindu chiefs supported the Arabs. Not only that, no Hindu ruler came forward to support Dahir against the Arabs. Hence, these facts show that the invasion of Sindh was not a religious crusade (Jihad). The results of the war also indicate in the same direction. There was no forcible conversion. Only voluntary conversion was welcomed. Many Hindus were employed in the administration.

In any case the Arab invasion was a failure because it was directed against the barren and unproductive provinces. It failed to make any progress in the spread of Islam. Nevertheless the Arabs have the credit of opening Indian front that ultimately led to the establishment of a vast empire and a Muslim rule over India for centuries. It strengthened Arab trade on the west Coast of India and encouraged more and more Arabs to enter into India trade.

Chapter - 10

INVASION OF MAHMUD OF GHAZNI

The conquest of Sindh by the Arabs was merely a passing episode in the history of India. It was limited only to Sindh and Multan. They failed to penetrate deep into India. Islam, which had covered a large part of the world, did not extended much beyond the river Indus and even had uncertain footing in the valley itself. The credit of establishing the Muslim rule in India goes to the Turks. The leadership of Islam was captured from the Arabs first by the Persians and then by the Turks. The Turks were originally barbaric hordes who were later converted to Islam and therefore as new converts of Islam they were more fanatics in their religious zeal than the Arabs. They also believed in the propagation of Islam by force. Hence, they conquered a large part of the western Asia and then moving towards east ultimately penetrated into India. Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni was the first to penetrate deep into India by defeating the Hindu rulers. He plundered the wealth of India but did not establish his empire. The credit of establishing Muslim Empire in India goes to Muhammad of Ghur who came nearly two hundred years after.

ORIGIN

The Yamini dynasty, generally known as the Ghaznavi dynasty, claimed its origin from the royal family of Persia. During the course of Arab invasion of Persia, the family fled to Turkistan and became one with the Turks. Alaptagin founded an independent kingdom of this family at Ghazni. Alaptagin died in 963 A.D. and was succeeded by his son Ishaq. His general Balaktagin succeeded him in 966 A.D. Then Pirai, a slave, captured the throne in 972 A.D..

Subaktagin, the son-in-law of Alaptagin captured the throne in 977 A.D. He ruled upto 997 A.D. and was succeeded by his son Mahmud in 998 A.D. Subaktagin was an able and ambitious ruler. Shortly after his accession, he conquered the kingdoms of Burt, Dawar, Qusdar, Bamiyan, Turkistan and Ghor. He then eyed the Hindu Shahi kingdom, which extended as far as Kabul Valley. Subaktagin plundered the frontier forts of the Hindu Shahi kingdom repeatedly. Realising the gravity of the situation the Hindushahi ruler Jayapala marched with a large army. He encountered Subaktagin and his young son Mahmud at a place between Lamghan and Ghazni. The battle between the two armies continued for several days. At the end, Jayapala was defeated but saved himself by concluding an ignominious treaty with Subaktagin.

But immediately after his return he repudiated the treaty, which forced Subaktagin to march against him for the second time. This time Jayapala had succeeded in forming a confederacy of Indian kings against Subaktagin. The confederacy included the Tomaras, Chahamanas and the Chandellas. Their army included more than a hundred thousand men. After a brief resistance, Subaktagin, who obtained a huge booty from the war, routed the Hindu army.

Political Condition of India on the eve of the Invasions

Politically India was divided into many kingdoms that constantly fought against each other. In the northwest there was the Hindu Shahi kingdom of Jayapal. Multan and Sindh were two Muslim ruled kingdoms. The Pratiharas ruled at Kanauj with Rajyapala as the ruler. Mahipala I was ruling over Bengal, Kashmir was an independent kingdom. In the south the Cholas and the Chalukyas were powerful dynasties.

Religion

There was general deterioration in religious and moral standards. Buddhism and Jainism were leading religions. Ignorance and superstitions had crept into religion. The rich and the upper class people utilised religion in their favour. The Hindu temples and the Buddhist monasteries had become centres of corruption.

Society

The society had become caste ridden. Rigidity of the caste system naturally brought discontentment among the lower castes. Besides the four traditional castes, a large section of people were called the *Anyaja* (otherwise born). The hunters, the weavers, the fisherman etc. belonged to this section. The position of this section was lower than the Sudras. The Sudras and the Vaishyas were not allowed to study religious texts.

Hence, the society was divided into several antagonistic groups.

Weapons

There was no improvement in the method of warfare. The Indian rulers mostly depended on elephants. Sword was their chief weapon. Defence was their best policy. They rarely took offensive measures. They did not try to learn lessons of warfare from their neighbours. The Arabs had already acquired the knowledge of using sophisticated weapons like balistas or majmiqs (catapults) which used to throw stone balls at random towards the enemies killing them instantly.

National Pride

India at the time of the invasion of Mahmud was politically, socially, and militarily weak. They failed to learn lessons from their neighbours. They were obsessed with a false pride. Alberuni wrote, "The Hindus believed that there was no country like theirs, no nation like theirs, no king like theirs, no religion like theirs". With such a negative attitude it was difficult for a nation to prosper.

Wealth

However, vast wealth was the greatest asset of India. Its agriculture, industries and trade were still in flourishing stage. Wealth was mostly concentrated in the temples. The wealth of India has been described like the wealth of a weak person, which naturally tempted any strong person to snatch it. And that is what Mahmud did.

MAHMUD OF GHAZNI

Succession

Abdul Qasim Mahmud, the eldest son of Subaktagin ascended the throne in 998 A.D. at the age of twenty-seven. He was born on 1st November 971 A.D. His succession was **not free from trouble**. At the time of the death of Subaktagin in 997 A.D. he was away from the capital leading the Khurasan army. Taking advantage of his absence the second son Ismail succeeded in getting himself nominated by Subaktagin and ruled for seven months till Mahmud captured the throne. In his youth he received education in sacred literature and in the art of warfare and government. As a young prince he fought against Jaipal under his father. At the time of his accession his kingdom comprised Afghanistan and Khurasan. He secured formal recognition of his sovereignty from the Khalifa of Baghdad (Al-Qadir-Billah). He was later given the titles of **Yamin-ud-Daulah** (right hand man of the empire) and Amin-ul-Millah (Protector of the Muslims). His dynasty therefore was known as **Yamini dynasty**. He was the first Muslim ruler to be credited with the title of Sultan. Mahmud is said to have taken a vow to lead a Jihad (holy war) against kefirs (infidels) of India every year.

Personality

Mahmud was an extremely ambitious young man. He was not gifted with a commanding personality and kingly looks. He was a man of medium height with smallpox marks on his face. This deprived him of all external beauty and grace rather he was ugly looking. He did not possess personal prowess. But he was an extremely intelligent and shrewd man with a rare sense of judging human character perfectly. His virtues were cool courage, prudence and resourcefulness. He was an expert in the statecraft and considered nobody as indispensable, and used every one for the attainment of his object.

His court Historian Utbi has described his Indian expeditions as Jihad, the holy war for the extirpation of idolatry and propagation of Islam. He has been described as a Muslim who **never lost a battle** in forty years as he waged Jihad. However the astute wine loving Sultan was neither a missionary nor a true believer of Islam. As a clever man with clear eye on his own profit he fought against the Hindus and Muslims alike. His sole motto was extension of his empire and acquisition of vast wealth for himself.

CAUSES OF INDIAN INVASIONS

First of all Mahmud's invasions of India have been described as Jihad or religious wars. But this has been contradicted by many who say that he attacked India to extend his empire. His attacks on the temples have been described as his desire to acquire wealth rather than out of religious zeal. If he troubled the Hindu kings and looted their wealth he also repeated the same story with the Muslim rulers of central Asia. So when Utbi describes the wars as Jihad others describe it as being for other reasons.

Secondly, the wealth of India attracted him more than anything else. Mahmud desired wealth for the sake of wealth. He waged repeated wars against India to acquire more and more wealth. India had acquired enormous gold and silver through its surplus overseas trade and the existence of abundant mineral wealth. The Indians had the habit of transferring their wealth to temples, which often acted as the royal treasury. Hence the temples became targets of attack.

Thirdly, his Indian expeditions were not only logical but were strategically important. The existence of a strong Hindushahi kingdom on his borders was a constant source of danger for his own safety and security. As such Jaipal had already led an expedition against Ghazni in which Mahmud had fought alongside his father. Besides he had seen how Jaipal repudiated the provisions of the peace treaty on his return to his capital. He did not like to have a powerful neighbour. Hence he adopted an aggressive policy under the theory 'offence is the best form of defence'. His success against the Hindushahi kingdom encouraged him to penetrate deeper into India.

Fourthly, as per the traditional practice a powerful ruler was bound to wage war against his neighbours both for offensive and defensive reasons. Like any other contemporary ruler he desired to get fame out of his victories. One victory led to another and the process continued.

Fifthly, the highly urbanised and disciplined nature of the society gave them a degree of superiority over their rivals. The sophisticated weapons and the disciplined army were bound to be called into action.

INDIAN INVASIONS

Mahmud led seventeen expeditions against India between 1000 and 1027 A.D. However the actual number of invasions is difficult to determine on account of the conflicting evidence of contemporary authorities. The number of invasions and their frequency throw light on the capacity of the man, his determination and the fixity of the purpose. He left Ghazni generally at the end of September-October and spent the winter here, which was not as cold as in Afghanistan. He returned to Ghazni in March-April before the on set of Indian summer and rainy season. He usually tried to avoid the scorching heat of north India and particularly the rains, which blocked the passage of his army. Therefore even the shortest of his campaigns has two years as its date, beginning in September-October and ending in March-April next year.

First expedition; In 1000 A.D. Mahmud led his first expedition against India and seized some fortresses on the neighbourhood of Peshawar.

Second; In 1001 - 1002 he again advanced with an army of 15.000 select cavalry and a large army and encamped in the outskirts of the city of Peshawar. On receipt of the information Jaipal proceeded to resist the invader with 12.000 cavalry, 30.000 infantry and 300 elephants. The battle between the two took place on November 27, 1001. Jaipal was defeated and taken prisoner. Five thousand of his men lost their lives. Anandapala, the son of Jaipal who had been left behind at Waihind to look after affairs of the state had to pay a huge booty of 25,000 dinars to secure the release of his father. Advancing further Mahmud captured the province around Peshawar. Then he advanced as far as the capital of the Hindushahi kingdom, Waihand (modern Hund) ravaging the country on the way. At the approach of Mahmud, Jayapala retreated to the neighbouring hills and devised a plan to fight back. But before he could organise himself Mahmud attacked and defeated him. Soon after that he returned to Ghazni crowned with laurels of victory and loaded with countless wealth.

Jayapala could not suffer himself to survive the shock of the humiliation of being defeated by an 'unclean foreigner' thrice and out of remorse he burnt himself to death. His son Anandapala succeeded him. This victory over the Hindushahis, the guardians of the northwest greatly discouraged other Hindu rulers and at the same time considerably raised the spirit of Mahmud.

Third; Mahmud spent next two years in a campaign against Sistan in the west. In 1004 A.D. he once again turned his attention towards India. He passed through Walistan, crossed Indus near Multan and reached Bhatiya, then ruled by Baji Ray. Baji Ray was a brave warrior. A huge wall and a moat protected the city. But Baji Ray came out of the city and took the offensive. The battle continued for three days and three nights. The Muslim army suffered heavy casualty and at a time was on the verge of defeat but on the fourth day Mahmud took a last ditch effort and occupied the city. Baji Ray killed himself. Mahmud took the city easily and made large-scale arrangements for the conversion of the citizens of Bhatiya into Islam. Then he returned to Ghazni in 1005 A.D.

Fourth; In 1005 A.D. Mahmud led an expedition against Multan to punish its ruler Abdul Fateh Daud, who was a Karmathian by faith. Orthodox Sunnis hated the Karmathians as heterodox Shia Muslims. Hence as heretics they deserved equal punishment as unbelievers. Daud's grandfather Shaikh Hamid Lodi had kept Subaktagin pleased with occasional gifts. But Daud's acceptance of the doctrine of the Ismailis sect made him hostile to Mahmud. Further, fearing that the fall of Bhatiya was exposing Multan open to Mahmud, Daud made a futile attempt to help Baji Ray. Hence naturally enough he became the next target of Mahmud. While marching towards Multan, Mahmud found the Indus in a flooded condition making it difficult for his cavalry to cross it. So he requested the Hindushahi king Anandapala to grant him free passage, which the later refused, as Daud was his ally. This led to a battle between the two in which Anandapala was defeated and flew to Kashmir. Then Mahmud marched towards Multan. Daud after seeing the fate of powerful Anandapala lost all courage and shut himself up in the fort. After a siege of seven days he was captured and was forced to pay 20,000,000 dirhams as indemnity. He was however allowed to rule on his promise to pay an annual tribute of 20,000 golden dirhams and to follow the Sunni doctrine.

Fifth; On his way back to Ghazni, Mahmud appointed a Hindu convert Nawasa Shah to look after his conquered territories in Hindustan. Mahmud remained busy in central Asia for about two years. Taking advantage of his long absence Nawasa Shah renounced Islam and declared himself as an independent ruler. He began to collaborate with Abdul Fateh Daud of Multan. Hence, in 1007-8 Mahmud directed his fifth expedition against Nawasa Shah. Nawasa Shah attempted to escape towards Kashmir but was captured and was made to pay huge indemnity.

Sixth; Inspite of repeated defeat of the Hindushahi rulers in the hands of Mahmud, they formed the most formidable stumbling block for him. The Hindushahi kingdom guarded the northwest frontier. Anandapala was fully conscious of the gravity of the situation. He organised a confederacy of the Indian kings with support from Delhi, Ajmer, Kalinjar, Gwalior, Kanauj and the Khokars of Punjab. There was a great enthusiasm among the Indians to resist Mahmud. "Hindu ladies sold their ornaments, the poorer among them worked hard at their spinning wheels" to provide money for the soldiers. A united effort was made to resist Mahmud.

Seventh; In 1008 Mahmud led an expedition against Anandapala to punish him for his conduct during the invasion of Multan. This time Mahmud resorted to strategy. He proceeded with the Khyber Pass, firmly under his control to make a safe retreat in case of defeat. He entrenched his main army on the bank of river Indus. The two armies remained encamped on both sides of the river for forty days without any attempt to start the war.

This time Mahmud was due to face the largest Indian army he was ever destined to face. Besides the vastness of the army he was aware of the fact that the Indians would "fight with devotion". But unfortunately a single commander did not direct the Indian army. Anandapala was important enough to take precedence but not strong enough to issue orders. On the contrary Mahmud's army was more disciplined and organised.

His soldiers were aware of the capacity of their master and were not likely to panic. As the time went on, the army of Anandapala increased daily in number due to support from neighbours. Ultimately Mahmud sent 6.000 archers to provoke the enemy to move forward. This had the desired effect and a bloody battle ensued. But the calculation of Mahmud failed. Immediately with the commencement of the battle 30,000 Khokhars swiftly killed 5,000 Muslim soldiers. Mahmud was on the verge of being defeated but suddenly the battle took a different turn. When a number of Mahmud's personal guards attacked the rear, the Hindu army was confused and many fled in panic. At this juncture an untoward incident led to the final defeat of the Hindus. The elephant, which carried Anandapal, was struck by an arrow, got out of control and fled from the battlefield. The soldiers took this as the flight of the leader and in confusion the entire army started to retreat. The Muslim generals chased them and killed nearly 20,000 of them. Mahmud himself chased Indian soldiers upto Bhimnagar or Nagarkot (modern Kangra).

The fort of Kangra was built on the top of the stiff and lofty hill surrounded by water. Huge quantity of wealth was stored in the fort accumulated by successive generations. Mahmud besieged the fort and after three days of resistance, the fort surrendered. The treasury of the fort consisted of 70,000 gold dirhams, gold and silver ingots of 7,00,400 mans jewels and precious stones and 200 maunds of pure gold and such other wealth which no other place could acquire at one time. Mahmud held a grand exhibition of the booty in the imperial lawns of Ghazni for many weeks, which was witnessed by Ambassadors from Muslim countries and the people in large number. This invasion broke down the backbone of the Indian defense and at the same time established the superiority of Mahmud as a warrior and as a Muslim crusader. His desire to plunder Indian wealth was further increased. This time he succeeded in annexing all the territories to the west of Indus including the Shahi capital of Waihind. The only national opposition ever offered to Mahmud ended in a total failure.

The successive victories of Mahmud made Anandapala realise the futility of carrying on any further war against him. He therefore shifted his capital to Nandanah and entered into a lasting peace with Mahmud by signing a treaty wherein he agreed to send him annually 50 elephants laden with valuables and accompanied by 2000 men for the service of the Sultan. Anandapala observed the provision of the treaty till his death in 1012 A.D. His son Trilochanapala who succeeded him respected the provisions of the treaty. The way to the heart of India was now open. Mahmud could march over the territory of Anandapala and strike beyond.

Eighth; In 1009 Mahmud led an army against Narayan or Narayanpur in the old Alwar State of Rajputana. The king fought bravely but was defeated. The Sultan broke the idols and returned to Ghazni.

Ninth; In 1010 Mahmud had to lead an expedition against Multan to settle his score forever. Daud the ruler had again turned hostile and the Ismaili sect was increasing in popularity. The city was captured and Daud was taken prisoner.

Tenth; In 1011 Mahmud led an expedition against Thaneswar. The Sultan received information that

Thaneswar possessed elephants of Sri Lanka breed who were very useful in the battlefield. Besides, there was an idol in a temple at Thaneswar, which was as holy in the eyes of the Hindus as Mecca in the eyes of Muslims. The place was also sure to possess enormous wealth. As a result of the treaty, Anandapala provided safe passage of Sultan's army through his kingdom. His brother accompanied the Sultan and looked after his needs. However the Sultan rejected the suggestion of Anandapala to sign a peace treaty with Thaneswar on payment of tribute as besides the acquisition of wealth he also intended to demolish this all-important Hindu temple. On the way he defeated a king named Rama the chief of Dera who fought against Mahmud to save the sacred city of Thaneswar.

The king of Delhi, in whose kingdom Thaneswar was situated, tried to organise a confederacy against the Sultan. According to him, "If we don't raise a dam to keep off this deluge, it will soon spread over the whole plain and submerge all kingdoms, great or small". But Mahmud reached Thaneswar before the confederacy could be organised and plundered the undefended city at leisure. The image of Chakraswami, a bronze image of Visnu was taken to Ghazni and thrown in to the hippodrome of the city. He wished to march to Delhi but had to abandon the idea, as he could not fully rely upon the co-operation of Anandapala. So he returned back to Ghazni.

Eleventh; Anandapala's death in 1012 upset the calculations of Mahmud. His son and successor Trilochanapala and his son Bhimapala however opposed the alliance. Hence Mahmud was once again forced to fight against the Hindushahi kingdom of Lahore in 1013

A.D. Trilochanapala gave a brave fight for several days. But finally was routed. Trilochanapala and Bhimapala withdrew to Kashmir. The Sultan entered into the capital Nandanah unopposed and seized the treasure.

From Nandanah Mahmud pursued Triolochanapala and defeated him along with his new ally Tunga, the general of the ruler of Kashmir. He was defeated and fled to Eastern Punjab. Mahmud plundered Kashmir, took many prisoners and converted many to Islam. The prisoners were sold at a very cheap price as slaves in Ghazni.

Twelfth; In 1015 Mahmud again attempted to force his way through Kashmir to put down some rebellious chiefs. The hill fort of Lohkot (modern Loharin) defied all his efforts. The fort was famous for its invincibility. Before testing defeat for the first time Mahmud returned hastily. Even on his return journey to Ghazni he suffered incalculable loss in the flood of Jhelum. He himself had a narrow escape.

Thirteenth; In 1018 after putting down the revolt at Khurazm Mahmud embarked up on a mission to penetrate as far as the heart of India. He decided to attack the imperial city of Kanauj. He made large-scale preparation for this invasion and started with 1,00,000 cavalry and 20,000 infantry. Towards the end of 1018 A.D. he started from Ghazni, crossed the six rivers (Sindhu, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas and Sultlej). The chiefs that he met on the way, submitted to him. Sangram, the ruler of Kashmir made peace with him and led the van of the invading troops. Trilochanapala refused to pay allegiance and fled to Paramara kingdom of Malava. The Sultan crossed Yamuna on 2nd December

1018 and reached Baran (modern Bulandshahr in Uttar Pradesh) and occupied it without resistance. Then Mahmud advanced down the Yamuna to Mahaban in the district of Mathura. It was ruled by a Hindu chief named Kulachand who gave a valiant fight but was defeated. To escape disgrace he killed his wife and son and then killed himself. The Sultan secured a large booty along with 185 war elephants.

The Sultan next directed his attacks against the sacred city of Mathura, the birthplace of Lord Krishna. A massive stonewall with only two lofty gates surrounded the city. He occupied the city without any resistance. He was amazed at the beauty of the city. There were magnificent temples all over the city with the largest of them at the centre. There were 5 idols made of pure gold weighing about 98.300 mishkals. It took him 20 days to ransack the city and seize the gold and silver idols. All the temples were ravaged to the ground.

From Mathura the sultan proceeded towards Kanauj. He reached Kanauj in January 1019. Kanauj, the capital of Harshavardhan was a well-fortified city with seven lofty forts. The ruler of Kanauj Rajyapala, the last Gurjara Pratihara ruler fled and Mahmud plundered the city at leisure.

From Kanauj Mahmud proceeded to Munj, situated in the vicinity of Kanpur or Itawah. It was known as the fort of the Brahmanas. They resisted for 25 days but finally surrendered. A large number of inhabitants including women and children threw themselves into fire. Then he advanced towards Asi near Fatehpur. Its ruler Chandrapála Bhur was a powerful ruler but when Mahmud invaded, he fled leaving the fort to the mercy of the enemy. Then Mahmud marched to Sharva near Saharanpur. Its ruler Chand Rai withdrew to a hill in a thick forest. However, that did not save him. Mahmud defeated him in January 1019. After this victory Mahmud returned to Ghazni with a huge booty and a large number of prisoners.

Fourteenth; In 1020-21 Mahmud returned to India to punish Chandella Vidyadhara who had attacked the Pratihara king and killed him for his cowardly conduct during the invasion of Mahmud. On his way the Shahi king Trilochanapala opposed him. Trilochanapala was defeated and killed by some Hindus while attempting to join Vidyadhara. Then he proceeded towards Dari, the newly built capital of the Pratiharas after the destruction of Kanauj. Then he proceeded towards Chandella where Vidyadhara met him with a formidable army. But before the actual war started the panic-stricken Vidyadhara fled during night under cover of darkness. However, seeing the vast army of Vidyadhara consisting of 45,000 infantry, 36,000 cavalry and 640 elephants Mahmud repented for undertaking the perilous expedition. The escape of Vidyadhara came as a blessing in disguise for him and he seized everything including the elephants. Mahmud subjugated places like Swat, Bajaur and part of Kafiristan. The inhabitants who were Buddhists were converted to Islam. Before returning to Ghazni Mahmud placed a reliable governor at Lahore and the rest of the province were assigned to various officers.

Fifteenth; In 1021-22 Mahmud returned to India once again to crush the Chandella Vidyadhara. On his way he attacked the fort of Gwalior, which was then in possession of Kachchhapaghatas. Kirtiraja the ruler successfully defended the fort for four days after which he sued for peace. The Sultan resumed his conquest and reached the fort of Kalanjana. He besieged the fort, but the Chandella prince Nanda saved himself by offering peace on payment of huge gift and annual tribute. He sent some Hindi verses composed by him in praise of the Sultan. The Sultan was so pleased with the prince that he bestowed on him the governance of 15 fortresses. However some scholars say that the invasion was a failure for Mahmud, as he did not come a long way from Ghazni only to bestow 15 forts on the Chandella prince, Nanda.

Sixteenth; Northern India had ceased to attract Mahmud as the wealth of most of its temples were already in his treasury. The rich and prosperous province of Gujrat was still untouched. On 18th October 1025 he started from Ghazni with his eyes on Gujrat. The temple of Somanath was situated on the seashore in Kathiawar under the domination of the Chalukyas of Anhilwara. It contained a huge Shiva Linga whose girth was 4 feet 6 inches and the height above the base was 7 feet 6 inches and 6 feet hidden beneath the base. One thousand Brahmins were appointed for the daily worship. Apart from the offerings of the devotees the temple was maintained out of the revenue of 10.000 villages donated by Indian rulers. The temple stood on huge blocks of stone. Its roof was supported by 56 wooden pillars, carved with precious stones. The pyramidal roof was made of 13 stories and was surmounted by 14 golden domes. The bell of the temple was attached to a chain for shaking which was of pure gold weighing 200 mans. The God was held in the highest honour among the Hindus, as the God of Gods. The Hindus held a belief that Mahmud could destroy many temples as those had lost the sympathy of Somanath. On hearing this Mahmud made up his mind to destroy Somanath with a view to strike at the root of the faith of the Hindus.

The Somanath expedition is the one for which Mahmud is most remembered both for its problems and achievements. Marching through the difficult country by way of Multan and the desert of Rajputana he reached Anahillapataka or Anhilwara the capital of Gujrat. His journey through the desert had been very difficult. However, on reaching the capital he found its king, Bhima I had already fled. After plundering the city he reached Somanath in the middle of January 1026. The guards of the temple offered a desperate resistance. About 50,000 of them were killed and Mahmud won the battle. He made a triumphant entry in to the temple, desecrated the idol by breaking it into pieces and took possession of the immense wealth of the temple. It is said that the priests of the temple offered him immense wealth only if he spared the idol, but he replied that he wished to be known as an idol breaker rather than an idol seller. The whole thing happened so fast that other Hindu rulers could not come to their rescue.

At Somanath Mahmud halted for a fortnight. His iconoclastic zeal had earned him the wrath of the Rajputs. He wanted to avoid any major clash during his return journey. Hence he followed the route through Kutch and Sindh. On the way he came across the fort of Kandahat, which was under the occupation of Chalukya Bhima I who fled out of fear. In any case he was greatly troubled by the Jats. His Hindu guide led him in a wrong route to a waterless desert to avenge the destruction of Somanath for which he had to pay with his dear life.

The contemporary Muslim rulers hailed the victory over Somanath with delight. The Khalifa sent him a congratulatory letter and Roles of Honour.

Seventeenth; In 1027 Mahmud came to India for the last time to punish the Jats who had troubled him during his return journey from Somanath. He organised a strong navy with 1400 boats for the expedition. The Jats on their turn organised 4,000 boats and gave a stiff resistance. But because of the superior skill and better boats of Mahmud the Jats lost. He plundered their kingdoms and returned back.

Mahmud's remaining years were exclusively engaged in western affairs. He died in April 1030 at the age of sixty-two.

NATURE AND EFFECTS

All great men are more or less products of their times and the environment in which they are placed. During his time fighting and militant spirit was looked upon among the Turks as a sport and as an attribute of manliness. Rebellious governors, tribal chiefs or even daring nobles expected to reach the eminence of Alexander, the great. Hence it was his ability not character that made him great.

A Plunderer rather than an Empire Builder

Mahmud was a great conqueror. He conquered a vast territory over the ruins of many governments. However he cannot be called as an empire builder. He went on conquering without being able to establish peace and order in the conquered lands. It was not his aim to establish his sway over India and that is why his campaigns were usually directed against big towns and rich temples. He didn't attack military establishments and forts unless it became absolutely necessary for him to proceed further. After the defeat of Mathura and Kanauj the northern India was at his feet, but he had no interest in bringing it under his control. The defeated Indian princes sometimes were reinstated on the promise to pay annual tribute but none took it seriously, neither the victor not the vanquished. His objective was to plunder and drain of economic resources. Each time when this object was fulfilled he returned back to Ghazni unmindful of annexation or administration.

Breathing Space

His spasmodic incursions naturally gave breathing space to the Indian rulers to raise their heads time and again. A chain of conquests and rebellions by recalcitrant Indian rulers was not conducive for consolidation. His empire was a huge agglomeration of people, kept in control by the mighty power of the Sultan but each one waited for an opportunity to become independent.

Strategy

Mahmud annexed Punjab, including Lahore and Multan and placed a governor there. The main purpose behind this sole exercise was to maintain the line of communication and facilities for the movement of his soldiers towards the heart of India. Nevertheless the condition of Punjab in matters of administration was chaotic.

An Estimate

Though India took much of Mahmud's time it had no place in his dream of establishing a vast Turko-Persian empire. The Indian expeditions gave him the prestige of a "**holy warrior**" which he required to be way ahead of other aspirants, determined to be great. The **wealth** that he **amassed** from India further enabled him to organise an army, which many others failed to achieve.

Beyond plunder, Mahmud, who knew the limitations of his power, did not try to go. A Muslim government at a far off place was beyond the range of practical politics without a native Muslim population to support it. **Annexation was not** his object. Even Lahore and Multan were treated like robber's perches, from where he could plunge into any part of India.

In his Indian conquests, Mahmud was venturing into the unknown country of hostile people with rivers, forests and deserts. It was a difficult task. But he advanced from point to point with caution and without taking any risk. A single false step would mean disaster. The loss of a single battle would leave his army at the mercy of an alien and hostile population. But caution brought success, success brought wealth and wealth brought strength and prestige. At a stage his **very name** had become powerful enough to **overawe** his enemies.

The greatest advantage that Mahmud enjoyed over his Indian opponents was the **unitary organisation** of his state. His entire resources were placed at his single disposal where as India was divided into many big and small kingdoms that very rarely could combine to give a show of resistance. The Indians had many good leaders, many good generals but each subordinate more often than not defied his superior where as the Ghaznavides knew and obeyed only one master. The Indian's did not lack fighting spirit. They often fought to the last man of the fort but could not stand before better leadership and more disciplined soldiers.

The Rajputs were hero worshippers. All of them tried to show bravery and chivalry. They directly jumped into the war and tried to take the bull by its horns. They knew **how to fight and die** in a war **not to win** a war. Many contemporary historians have described the wanton destruction of temples with pride. But at the same time it has been described as an easy justification in the guise of religion for worldly motives. Islam doesn't sanction vandalism or plundering. No Shariat justifies uncalled for attack on people who have not done any harm to Islam.

Hence Islam has been utilised to justify what has been done rather by posterity. It was natural that the Hindus who had been robbed would not love Islam. "They came, burnt, killed, plundered, captured and went away" was the summary of Mahmud's invasions of India.

The works of Mahmud **lacked permanence**. Within a decade of his death there was a Hindu revival. Even the Muslim invaders who came after Mahmud were a changed lot. The arrogance had disappeared. Instead of plunder there came a group of people who wanted a safe living place. They carved out a place for themselves in Indian soil. Mahmud has nothing to do with the proper history of India but his successors have many contributions.

Mahmud's invasion **exposed the weakness** of the political fabric of India. The Hindushahis, the defenders of the gateway of India in the northwest perished. The Khyber Pass was lost to the foreigners forever. The powerful Rajput princes were defeated and humiliated. The disunity of the country was exposed.

The citizens were massacred in cold blood. Thousands of them were taken as slaves and were sold in the markets of Baghdad. Important citizens of India were seen working as slaves in shops of Baghdad. Flourishing cities were reduced to the dust. Millions of people were rendered homeless and quite a few were forcibly converted. Northern India presented a **desolate look**. The civilization was fatally wounded and left bleeding. And all these due to lack of political unity and leadership among the Indian rulers.

However, in spite of all these Mahmud was one of the **greatest military generals** the world has ever produced. He inherited a small kingdom consisting of the provinces of Ghazni and Khurasan but created an empire from Iraq and Caspian Sea to the river Ganga that was more extensive than the empire of the Caliph of Baghdad. He was neither a great statesman nor a good ruler. Since he **led his army himself** he had to be out of headquarters for very long periods. His ministers generally managed the state. He left a mighty army and a royal treasury full to the brim.

He was himself illiterate but was a **patron of art and learning**. A galaxy of scholars, poets and artists adorned his court and received liberal patronage from him. The prominent among them were Alberuni, Baihaq, Utbi, Firdausi, Shahanama, Farrukhi Unsari, the poet laureate and Farabi, the philosopher. He established a university, a library and a museum at Ghazni.

His administration was a military dictatorship under which the people enjoyed **no civil liberty**. In any case he enjoyed a reputation for his great sense of justice who did not hesitate to punish his own son and nephew. Mosques and palaces beautified the city of Ghazni. The craftsmen from Mathura and other places of India were utilised for the purpose. He was an orthodox Suni Muslim and did not spare even his Muslim subjects who believed in other sects.

Inspite of all his achievements, Mahmud was not a nation builder. Lanepoole says, "He left his dominions so ill-knitted together that they began to fall asunder as soon as he was no longer alive to guard them by his vigilant activity".

ALBERUNI'S DESCRIPTION OF INDIA

Abu Rihan better known as Alberuni (973 A.D. to 1048 A.D.) came to India in the train of Mahmud and stayed in the country for sometime. He was a mathematician, a philosopher, an astronomer and a Sanskrit scholar combined in one. He systematically studied the manners, customs and institutions of the Hindus and has left a vivid account in his famous work 'Kitab-ul-Hind' or Alberuni's India. E. Sachau has translated this work into English. He has mentioned about the political condition of India and its divisions into many small kingdoms. The kingdoms of Kashmir, Sindh, Malwa, Gujrat, Bengal and Kanauj are mentioned as important kingdoms. He refers to child marriage and sati. Widow marriage was not permitted. Idol worship was common. Wealth was accumulated in the temples. He had studied the Upanishad and appreciated its philosophy. The administration of justice though crude and primitive was liberal and humane. Brahmins were exempted from capital punishment and taxation. The standard rate of taxation was 1/6 of the produce. Religion was dominated by superstitions. The society was gripped by a rigid caste system, which made unification of various groups impossible.

Chapter - 11

INVASIONS OF MUHAMMAD OF GHUR

The real founder of the Muslim Empire in India was Muiz-ud-din-Muhammad bin Sam, popularly known as Shihab-ud-din Muhammad Ghori or Muhammad Ghori. Muhammad-bin-Qasim was the first Muslim invader of India but he failed to lay the foundation of a Muslim empire. Similarly Mahmud of Ghazni though attacked India seventeen times and entered as far as the heart of India yet the only permanent effect of his invasions was the annexation of Punjab. It was Muhammad Ghori who built up a Muslim empire in India, which had lasting impact.

ORIGINAL HOME

The mountainous district of Ghur was situated at a high altitude of more than ten thousand feet between Ghazni and Herat. In the 10th century A.D. it was an independent principality and was ruled by a Tojik family of Persian origin known as Shanshani dynasty. Primarily the district was agricultural but at the same time it was famous in central Asia for its horses and steel, the two most important requirements of warfare. Ghur maintained its independence till its ruler Muhammad bin Suri was defeated by Mahmud of Ghazni around 1009 A.D. Since then it existed as a feudatory of Ghazni. After the death of Mahmud of Ghazni when the Ghaznavide Empire started to decline the rulers of Ghur not only became independent but also began to assert themselves in the entire region. In the process of succession Saif-ud-din was succeeded by his cousin Muiz-ud-din Muhammad to the throne of Ghur in 1163 A.D. This man popularly known as Muhammad Ghori became the third important Muslim invader of India and the founder of Muslim Empire in India as well. He conquered Ghazni in 1173 A.D. and started to rule from Ghazni. He always accepted his elder brother Ghiyas-ud-din who was ruling over Ghur as his suzerain till his death and struck coins and read Khutba in his name though virtually he enjoyed the status of an independent ruler.

CAUSES OF INDIAN INVASIONS

Control over Punjab

There was a long-standing conflict between the Ghurides and the Ghaznavides. When the Ghori rulers captured Ghazni and established their rule over Ghazni they naturally considered themselves as the heir to Punjab. By the time of Muhammad of Ghur Punjab was still under the rule of a prince of the family of Ghazni named Khusrav Shah or Khusrav Mallik. So Muhammad desired to finish the remaining strength of Ghazni by invading Punjab.

The Western expedition of Muhammad was strongly resisted by the rising power of the Khwarizm dynasty of Persia. The conquest of west however was left to his elder brother Ghiyas-ud-din. Hence Muhammad wanted to wage wars in the east to eliminate the enemy in the rear. With control over Punjab it would be easier to fight against the Ghaznavide rulers of Lahore and the Karmathians of Multan.

Propagation of Islam

Muhammad of Ghur was a pious Muslim and as such he considered it to be his duty to bring the message of Prophet Muhammad to the Hindus of India and to put an end to the idolatry. In any case Muhammad of Ghur was more political than religious. Unlike Mahmud his main objective was to establish an empire in India though the propagation of Islam followed as a matter of course.

Military Zeal

Muhammad was an ambitious ruler and a capable military general. He had strong imperial instincts in the age of military glory. Like all great rulers of his age he wanted to extend his empire for power and glory and to establish himself as a greater conqueror than Mahmud of Ghazni. However, he was not a military genius like Mahmud of Ghazni. Unlike Mahmud of Ghazni who was never defeated in a war Muhammad of Ghur had crushing defeats atleast a couple of times.

An Empire Builder

Plunder was not the main aim of Muhammad of Ghur as was the case with Mahmud of Ghazni. He did acquire enough gold and silver as booty or tribute, which helped him in raising, a strong army. But that was not the be all and end all of his purpose. He was a shrewd empire builder. He did not wage unplanned and ruthless campaigns in quick succession. Instead he launched every expedition with a set plan and fixed purpose in mind. After every conquest he took care to establish firm military and civil hold over the acquired territories before taking the next step forward.

Lack of Unity among Indians

In the second half of the 12th century India was divided into many kingdoms. Though many of them were powerful enough to meet the challenge of foreign invasions yet constant fighting among them not only kept them busy but also weakened them. Within a period of 150 years from the last invasion of Mahmud of Ghazni the Indian rulers had failed to unite themselves and to build up a strong resistance against the ensuing Muslim invasion. As a matter of fact, probably they had misread the writings on the walls. Since Mahmud of Ghazni had no interest in establishing an empire in India and was primarily interested in wealth all the Muslim invaders should not have been taken in the same light. Many Indian rulers went to the extent of inviting and patronising Muhammad of Ghur against their Indian enemies, a treachery for which history will never forgive them.

Social Condition

When political condition of India was dominated by lack of unity and constant infighting the social conditions of India was no better. The rigid caste system was not liked by many who were its victims. The 12th century Indian society had many Muslim settlements. These small Muslim colonies though lived peacefully and had no bearing on the socio-political structure of India yet they were useful and sympathetic for the Muslim invaders. Hence, all these factors attracted Muhammad of Ghur to India.

CONQUEST OF MULTAN, SINDH AND PUNJAB

Muhammad led his early expeditions through the Gomal pass, not through the Khyber Pass, as the former was 'safer and shorter route'. By virtue of the new route Multan and Ouch were the first two kingdoms to come on his way. He conquered these two from the Karmathian rulers in 1175 A.D. and set up an efficient civil administration under his own governor. The directions followed by Muhammad up to this was alright but when he attempted to cross the desert and penetrate into Gujrat forgetting the experience of Mahmud and acting against the dictates of geography he had to suffer reverses. Muhammad crossed the desert in 1178 and reached the foot of Mount Abu with an exhausted and famished army. Mularaja II, the Chalukya ruler inflicted a crushing defeat on Muhammad who luckily escaped. This defeat practically forced him to change his direction of entering into India. Thereafter he decided to enter through the northern route, the Khyber Pass and make efforts to conquer Punjab from the Ghaznavides.

In 1178 A.D. Chakradeo, the ruler of Jammu invited him to help him against Khusrav Mallik, the

Ghaznavide ruler who was helping the Khokar tribesmen against Chakradeo. Accordingly Muhammad conquered Peshawar in 1179 A.D. He converted it into a strong military base for his other Indian conquests.

In 1181 Muhammad invaded Lahore. He failed to take it but succeeded in forcing a treaty on Khusrav Mallik who had to send his infant son as a hostage to ensure implementation of the treaty.

In 1182, Muhammad led a surprise attack on Debal and forced the Sumras to acknowledge his suzerainty. He acquired a huge booty from Sindh. In 1185, he led his army from Peshawar along the foothills and., Khusrav Malik; the ruler of Lahore was supported by the Khokar tribes. Muhammad Ghori resorted to treachery to defeat him. He pretended to open dialogue and released his son who was taken hostage 5 years earlier. Khusrav Malik accepted the bait and came out of the fort when he was taken captive. His army surrendered without fight. This put an end to Ghaznavide rule in India and entire Punjab was annexed to the Ghori Empire.

CONQUEST OF DELHI

First Battle of Tarain

After the occupation of Punjab the boundaries of the kingdoms of Muhammad and Prithviraj III, the Chauhan ruler of Delhi and Ajmer touched each other. As a matter of fact although Muhammad conquered Punjab, Multan and Sindh he was yet to test the strength of the valiant Rajputs. The Rajputs were proud of their pedigree and jealous of their honour. Fighting was their pride. They abhorred to think of surrender. After thorough preparation for three years Muhammad occupied Bhatinda. Prithviraj Chauhan III (or Rai Pithora as described by Ghaznavide historians) was determined to check the advance of Muhammad Ghori. He marched with a strong army, which according to Firistha included 2 lakh horses and 3,000 elephants. The two armies met each other in the battlefield of Tarain about 128 kms from Delhi. Thus, the famous First battle of Tarain took place between Muhammad and Prithviraj Chauhan in 1190-91 A.D.

Prithviraj was helped by his fellow Rajput princes. Jaichandra, the Rathor Raja of Kanauj was the only Rajput prince who kept aloof from the war as Prithviraj had insulted him by carrying away his daughter, Sanjukta by force. In any case Muhammad was defeated and was seriously wounded in the battlefield. Prithviraj recaptured the fort of Bhatinda after a long seize of 13 months. It was a deplorable war strategy, which took the Rajputs long thirteen months to recapture their own fort, which Muhammad had captured in a single sweep from them.

Second Battle of Tarain

After the debacle of the first Battle of Tarain Muhammad Ghori prepared himself in an organised way to avenge the defeat. He punished all those officers and soldiers who were responsible for the defeat. In 1192 he again proceeded towards India with 1,20,000 horsemen to meet Prithviraj III. He recaptured the fort of Bhatinda and reached Tarain. As many as 150 Rajput chiefs supported Prithviraj. But Muhammad adopted clever tactics. He engaged four divisions of mounted archers to fight from four directions including the rear. The soldiers were instructed not to go very close to the Rajput army but only to keep them engaged and if necessary to retreat immediately. Muhammad himself waited few miles away with the fifth division of reserves. The enemy was not allowed to gauge his actual strength. The Rajput army was kept engaged for the entire day but towards the end of the day Muhammad Ghori thrust the reserves to the battlefield and totally defeated the exhausted and nonplused Rajputs. Prithviraj tried to flee from the battlefield but was captured and killed later. His chief lieutenant Govind Raj who had defeated Muhammad in 1191 was killed in the battlefield. The Muslims defeated the Hindus in spite of their numbers.

The Second Battle of Tarain was a landmark in the history of India. It ensured the ultimate success of the Muslims in India and settled the future course of Indian history. It was not only a defeat of the Chauhans but also a defeat of entire India. It paved the path for the establishment of a Muslim empire in India. The Rajputs had given a concerted effort but failure demoralised them all. This provided a foothold to the Turks in the heart of India, which had far reaching impact.

The Turkish victory at Tarain did not lead to the automatic fall of Delhi and Ajmer. These towns were also defended stubbornly by those who had escaped from Tarain. Muhammad Ghori left his brilliant slave general Qutb-ud-din Aibak as governor of Delhi and Ajmer and himself went back to Ghazni. He made Delhi the capital of Muslim kingdom in India in 1193 A.D. and conquered the adjoining areas of Meerut, Bulandshahr, Aligarh etc.

on his own. Thus Muhammad of Ghor planted the Turkish kingdom in the heart of India.

OTHER CONQUESTS

Conquest of Kanauj

Muhammad Ghori came back to India in 1194 A.D. with the kingdom of Kanauj as his target. The ruler of Kanauj, Jayachandra, had not helped Prithviraj at Tarain because of his personal enmity. However, Muhammad of Ghor had rightly realised the importance of Kanauj to leave it as an independent kingdom. The Muslim writers have described Kanauj as the greatest Hindu kingdom of that time. Hence an independent Kanauj was always a danger for Turkish kingdom in India.

The army of Muhammad and that of Qutb-ud-din Aibak together marched towards Kanauj. Jayachandra, the Gahadawala ruler met them single handed near Chandawar on the river Yamuna between Etawah and Kanauj. He launched a vigorous attack in which the Turkish army was perplexed. He was about to score a victory when Jayachandra himself, who was fighting in the midfield, was accidentally struck by and arrow in the eye and fell dead. This threw the army in to confusion and once again Muhammad Ghori was lucky enough to win a loosing battle. The confusion in the Rajput army was turned into a rout. Muhammad proceeded up to Banaras conquering all the territories on the way. The fort of Asni, a very important fort was also captured. The victory was followed by ruthless massacre and destruction of temples. At Banaras alone he is said to have destroyed 1000 temples and mosques were raised in their places.

The victory added extensive territory of Hindustan to the Turkish kingdom, as far Banaras. The victory was as significant as the battle of Tarain. Muhammad acquired huge wealth out of this victory, which he carried on 1400 camels to Ghazni.

The capital city of Kanauj however remained unconquered. The descendants of Jaichandra continued to rule from there and Muhammad did not think it prudent to invade that part so early.

Revolt among the Rajput

After the victory of Chandwar Muhammad returned to Ghazni leaving Aibak in-charge of India. Taking advantage of his absence from India many Rajput chiefs revolted. The Dor Rajputs of Koil (Aligarh) were the first to revolt but were suppressed by Aibak with ease. The next rebellion occurred in and around Ajmer. The Chauhans made their third attempt to break away from the Turks. Hari Rai Chauhan drove away Govinda Raja his nephew from Ajmer for his submission before the Turks. After capturing Ajmer Hari Rai made preparations to attack Delhi. But Aibak intercepted him around Ajmer. Hari Rai retreated back to the fort of Ajmer, which was besieged by Aibak. Finally, finding no other way out Hari Rai burnt himself to death. Thereafter, a Turkish governor was appointed over Ajmer.

Conquest of Gwalior

In 1195-96 A.D. Muhammad made another round of invasion to India. Bayana was conquered from the Jadon Bhatti Rajputs in 1196 A.D. Its chief Kumarapala surrendered and the territory was placed under the charge of a Turkish noble Baha-ud-din Tughril. After this Muhammad invaded Gwalior. Sulakshanapala, the Parihara chief opened negotiations for peace. Muhammad accepted it but later violated the agreement and instructed Tughril to capture the fort of Gwalior. It took him a long period of one and half years to conquer the fort.

Rising in Ajmer

In 1196 A.D. after the return of Muhammad to Ghazni the Chauhans of Ajmer with the support of Mher Rajputs of Malwa and the Chalukya ruler of Anhilwara tried to oust the Turks from Ajmer for the fourth time. They defeated the Turkish garrison at Ajmer. When Aibak came to their help he was also defeated and obliged to seek shelter within the fort. The chance arrival of a fresh contingent from Ghazni forced the Rajputs to raise the seize. Aibak retaliated by attacking Anhilwara, the capital of the Chalukyas of Gujrat. Bhima II, the Chalukya chief collected a huge army and met Aibak at the foot of Mount Abu. In the battle that followed 15,000 Rajputs were killed and 20,000 were taken prisoner and enslaved. The capital city was mercilessly devastated and temples were demolished and plundered. However, Bhima II, escaped. Aibak placed a Turkish officer in-charge of Gujrat. But soon after the return of Aibak, Bhima II surfaced and slowly recaptured Gujrat.

Conquest of Bundelkhand

Muhammad could not come back to India for the next few years. Hence, the responsibility of consolidating his conquests in India rested on Aibak. In 1202-03 A.D. he invaded Bundelkhand. The Chandella ruler Parmardi

Deva was besieged in the fort of Kalinjar, which was the military capital of the Chandella king. The seize lasted for a long time. Out of despair Parmardi Deva was about to surrender when his Prime Minister Ajaya Deva killed him and himself continued the resistance. The Turks succeeded in diverting the spring, which supplied water to the fort for which Ajaya Deva was forced to surrender. Thus, Kalinjar, Mehba and Khajuraho were occupied and annexed to the Turkish Empire.

Conquest of Bihar

When Aibak was busy in conquering in the north and central India one of his generals Ikhtiyar-ud-din Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khilji was planing to conquer Bihar and Bengal. This man was of ungainly build with ugly looks who had his arms long enough to reach to the calves of legs while standing erect. In 1197 A.D. he organised an attack against Bihar with 200 horsemen. He had the full support of Aibak. Indruman, the ruler of Bihar ran away without giving a fight. The capital of Bihar Odantapuri was captured and plundered. The Buddhist monasteries of Bihar including the University of Nalanda were destroyed. This took place in 1202-03 A.D., which means he stayed in Bihar for 3/4 years.

Conquest of Bengal

In 1204-05 A.D. Bakhtiyar Khilji led an attack as Nadia, the capital of the Pala ruler Lakshmanasena of Bengal. Lakshmanasena fled the capital without a fight. Nadia was occupied by him but not permanently. From Nadia he proceeded to Lakhnawati on the banks of the river Ganga, in the district of Malda. No attempt was made by him to conquer the whole of Bengal. However, he occupied the districts of Malda, Dinajpur, Murshidabad and Birbhum. From Bengal he proceeded towards Tibet. However, he died in 1206 leaving his conquests incomplete.

LAST DAYS OF MUHAMMAD GHORI

Muhammad's elder brother Ghiyas-ud-din died in 1203 and since then Muhammad became the ruler of entire Ghur Empire with the title Muiz-ud-din. Ghiyas-ud-din had always fought against the western enemies, which provided enough time for Muhammad to make repeated invasions against India. The last two years of Muhammad were full of troubles and misfortunes. In 1205 he suffered a humiliating defeat in the hands of Shah Khwarizm of Persia, who was his archenemy at the battle of Andhkhud.

This defeat of Muhammad had its impact on his Indian dominion. The news of the defeat spread like wild fire and even it was rumoured that Muhammad had been killed. This led to revolts in different parts of India. The Khokhars who lived between Lahore and Ghazni revolted and tried to capture Lahore. Aibak sent an appeal to Muhammad to come to India in 1205 A.D. Muhammad came to India and defeated the Khokhars. On his return journey to Ghazni, some Shia rebels and Khokhars stabbed him to death on 15th March 1206 at Dhamyak.

CAUSES OF INDIAN DEFEAT

History will not forgive the Hindu kings who presided over the destiny of this great land and were responsible for its failure. The repeated warnings of the past went unheeded by them. The onslaught began with the Arab invasion of Sindh in the 8th century when the Hindus were given a foretaste of what was due to come. The invasions of Mahmud of Ghazni came in the 11th century and finally the Turks in the 12th century. The rapidity with which Muhammad conquered India and the unpreparedness of the Indian rulers to face him has no explanation. They should have learnt lessons from each defeat.

Lack of Unity

Various reasons have been ascribed for Indian defeat. The British writers ascribe Indian defeat to inferiority of the Indian soldiers and the superiority of the Turks, as they came from the cold climate, were meat eaters and were used to warfare. This view is not correct. The individual courage and bravery of the Indians was far superior to the Turks but they lacked political unity. There was no paramount power in the country. They often fought against each other for which they could not organise themselves against a foreign invasion. There was too much of clannish spirit among them. Hence they were defeated one by one.

Ill-organised Army

The Rajput armies were ill organised and ill equipped. The trouble with Indians was that they were satisfied with whatever they had. They did not learn anything from the superior military tactics used by the Arabs and Mahmud of Ghazni. The Indians were outclassed in weapons and out-maneuvered in tactics.

Mobility was essential for an army. When the Turks depended upon horses the Rajputs relied more on elephants.

Lack of Strategy

Besides the military skill the strategy of the Rajputs was defective. They were hero worshippers for which all of them tried to show bravery and chivalry. They directly jumped into the war without proper planning, whereas the Muslims made planned attacks from all directions. The Indians knew how to die in the war not how to fight and win a war.

Lack of Planning

The Rajputs staked everything they had on a single battle. They could not distinguish between a battle and a war. They had no planing for the future. Therefore, the result was that after one defeat nothing was left.

Defensive rather than Offensive

The Rajputs believed more in defence than in offense. They rarely went out to take offensive and always waited for the enemy to reach them first.

No Religious Tinge

The wars led by the Turks had a religious tinge. Their soldiers were inspired as fighting for *jihad* whereas Hindus had no feeling of defending their religion against Islam. On the contrary the rivalry between Hindus and Buddhists helped the Muslims.

Social Problems

Not only that the political system of the country was weak the social system had also become rickety. Many people had lost faith in the society and had no desire to defend a system, which they did not like. Fighting was the profession of a particular group. A bulk of the population was excluded from the military service. The masses therefore did not cooperate with the leaders and soldiers.

Lack of Farsight

According to Buddha Prakash the defeat of the Indians was more a suicide than a murder. The Hindus instead of organising themselves often committed the mistake of taking the bull by the horn. The success of the first battle of Tarain should not have made Prithviraj complacent, instead he should have prepared more vigorously anticipating the return of Muhammad Ghori.

Lack of Nationalism

National consciousness, love of country and pride of freedom were lacking among the Indians. In case of the invasions of Muhammad Ghori the Indian rulers probably failed to realise its nature. They considered it like a repetition of history i.e. plunder as the chief motive. They failed to foresee that history was being made. The foundations of an empire were being laid which lasted for 500 years and gripped the entire nation.

NATURE AND EFFECTS

Empire Builder

Both Mahmud of Ghazni and Muhammad of Ghur were invaders with full religious zeal. They stood to spread Islam by force of arms. They believed in *jihad* (holy war) and inspired their soldiers accordingly. But while Mahmud of Ghazni set his target on plundering, Muhammad Ghur devoted himself in establishing an empire. Wealth was not the primary attraction for Muhammad Ghori. He wanted more and more of territory to be added to his kingdom where as Mahmud of Ghazni had no such intention. Therefore, even after being defeated he made repeated efforts to achieve the target. On the contrary Mahmud of Ghazni had never been defeated. Muhammad of Ghur learnt lessons from his defeat, took every failure as an experience, improved upon his weaknesses and at the end achieved success.

Selection of Successors

In the process of the expansion of his empire he selected persons like Qutb-ud-din Aibak, Taj-ud-din Yulduz and Malik Baha-ud-din Tughril who were successful warriors and capable administrators. Professor A.B.M. Habibullah writes, "If he failed to found a dynasty, he yet tried to found a dynasty, he yet trained up a band of man who were to prove more loyal to his ideals and better to maintain his empire".

Muhammad had no time to look after his Indian administration. He practically remained as the ruler of Ghazni and Ghur. His Indian dominion was mostly left to his slave and Governor, Qutab-ud-din Aibak.

Since Muhammad Ghori had no son his vast empire was divided into different parts among his relations and ambitious governors. Taj-ud-din Yulduz held the area from Afghanistan to upper Sindh, Nasir-ud-din Qubacha held Uch and Multan and Qutab-ud-din Aibak occupied the Indian provinces.

Socio-Cultural Effects

The establishment of Turkish rule in India had its impact in socio-political and cultural fields. The centralised administration of the Turks was reflected in India. A close contact between India and the outer Asiatic world developed in various fields. Trade received new impetus. The Turkish invaders brought with them an urban revolution. The caste ridden social structure was rejected and a sort of social equality developed. Fighting was no more the monopoly of any caste or group. Feudal armies gave way to strong standing armies. Persian language was introduced in India as the administrative language throughout India instead of different languages and dialects in different parts of India.

Chapter - 12

THE SLAVE DYNASTY

Muhammad Ghori had no son to inherit his empire. He had an unnatural death for which it was not possible for him to name his successor. Hence his vast empire was parceled out among his nobles and slave officers. At Ghazni, he was succeeded by Ala-ud-din who was very soon displaced by his nephew Ghiyas-ud-din Muhammad. In his Indian dominion, Qutb-ud-din Aibak who was the governor during the lifetime of Muhammad became virtually independent.

Qutb-ud-din Aibak assumed the reigns of government as an independent ruler at Lahore on 24th June 1206. He laid the foundation of a new dynasty, which was popularly known as Slave Dynasty.

Origin

The History of slaves is quite old. In ancient times citizens of the defeated nations were procured and sold out as slaves. Muhammad Ghori in fact purchased and liberated many Turkish youths from the clutches of others and patronised many of them who were capable. In return he received their affection and unqualified service. Many of his slaves rose to prominent positions of military generals and governors. Qutb-ud-din Aibak was one such slave officer of Muhammad Ghori (purchased from Turkistan) who had helped him in his Indian conquests and even extended his Indian empire when Muhammad was away from India. In 1206 Aibak was formally invested with Vicarage powers and promoted to the rank of Sipahsalar and Malik by Muhammad himself.

Aibak started his reign with the modest title of Malik and Sipahsalar, which were conferred upon him by Muhammad. He did not strike coins nor got the Khutba read in his name. He also did not assume the title of sultan because technically he was still a slave, as he had not received formal manumission (khat-i-azadi) from his master. In 1208 Aibak received manumission from Sultan Ghiyas-ud-din Muhammad, the nephew and the legal successor of Muhammad Ghori at Ghazni and Ghur. He conferred the title of Sultan on Aibak.

The early Turkish Empire founded by Aibak lasted from 1206 to 1290. It is popularly, but inaccurately called as Slave dynasty and sometimes also as Pathan or Afghan dynasty. The dynasty is called Slave dynasty because the founders of the dynasty, Qutb-ud-din Aibak and two other important rulers such as Iltutmish and Balban were slaves at the outset of their careers. The two terms of slave and sultan are contradictory terms. No slave could ascend a throne unless he obtained a letter of manumission (Khat-i-azadi) from his master and a slave is no longer a slave when his master manumits him. Aibak was manumitted in 1208 and Iltutmish and Balban were manumitted by their respective masters long before assuming sovereign powers. All the other rules of the line were freemen by their birth. It is also wrong to club the entire period from 1206 to 1290 A.D. under one dynasty. They actually belonged to three distinct ruling houses such as the Qutbi dynasty of Qutb-ud-din Aibak (1206- 1210), the first Ilbari or Shamshi dynasty (1210-1266) founded by Shams-ud-din Iltutmish and the second Ilbari dynasty (1266-1290) founded by Ghiyas-ud-din Balban.

QUTB-UD-DIN AIBAK (1206-1210 A.D.)

Qutb-ud-din Aibak was the real founder of the Turkish rule in India. He was a brave, energetic and capable military general who was responsible for the success of sultan Muhammad Ghori in India. After the death of Muhammad he became the independent ruler of India and ruled over the already conquered territories from Lahore to Bengal and Bihar. He ruled for four years. He strengthened his position by matrimonial alliances with influential and rival chiefs. He married the daughter of Taj-ud-din Yulduz, the leader of the slave officers of Muhammad Ghori who was in possession of Ghazni. Aibak gave his sister in marriage to Nasir-ud-din Qubacha, another slave officer who held Sindh and Uch under him. He gave his daughter in marriage to Iltutmish, one of his own Turkish slave officers. During his short span he did not find time for establishing a sound administration. His administration was purely military and rested on the support of army. His civil administration was carried on through his military officers. His local administration was left to the village

Panchayats. He granted partial civil liberties to the Hindus against the payment of *Jiziya.*

He was a man of letters and patronised learned persons. Hasan Nizami and Fakhra Mudir dedicated their books to him. He possessed high moral character and extended liberal donations to the poor, which earned him the title of *Lakhbaksh* or *Lakhdata* (giver of lakhs). He has some contribution in the field of architecture. He built two mosques one at Delhi (Quwwat-ul-Islam) and the other at Ajmer (Dhaidin ka Jhonpara) built out of the materials of the Hindu and Jain temples destroyed by him.

He died in 1210 A.D. at Lahore while playing *Chaughan* (horse polo) by falling from his horse. His son Aram Shah succeeded him at Lahore. But the nobles of Delhi did not support this weak young man and invited Aibak's son-in -law and governor of Badaun, Iltutmish to occupy the throne of Delhi. Thus, Iltutmish occupied the throne in 1210 A.D.

ILTUTMISH (1211-1236 A.D.)

Shams-ud-din Iltutmish was the greatest ruler of early Turkish Empire in India. He excelled all the sultans of Delhi as a king and as a man. He was handsome, intelligent, sagacious and of excellent manners. According to Tabaqat-i-Nasiri of Minhas-us-Siraj, 'never was a sovereign so virtuous, kindhearted and reverent towards the learned and the divines' and that he was just, benevolent, impartial, a jealous warrior and hero, patron of the learned and dispenser of justice.

He was born in a Turkish noble family of the Ilbari tribe of central Asia. His father was Ilam Khan. Because of his promising character his envious half-brothers deceitfully sold him to a slave trader. After passing through many hands he was purchased by Jamal-ud-din who took him to Ghazni. Finally, Qutb-ud-din Aibak purchased him at Delhi, on payment of an exorbitant price of one lakh jittals. He had received good education and proper training as a soldier during his early days of adversity. Even Muhammad Ghori was so satisfied with the military capacity of Iltutmish that he recommended to Aibak saying, "Treat Iltutmish well, for he will distinguish himself". Iltutmish proved his worth and rose to higher positions by dint of his own merit. He got promotions in quick succession till he became the master of the Royal hunt (Amir-i-Shikar). He was sent in-charge of the fort of Gwalior, then Governor of Baran (Bulandshahr) and finally as the Governor of Badaun. He married the daughter of Aibak. In a war against the Khokars in 1205-06 sultan Muhammad was so impressed with his valour that he advised Aibak to set Iltutmish free from slavery. This was quickly complied and he was manumitted. This manumission happened at a time when Muhammad Ghori himself had never bothered to manumitate his own slave generals including Qutb-ud-din Aibak. Nevertheless he recommended the manumission of Iltutmish.

SUCCESSION

On the sudden death of Aibak at Lahore the *Amirs* and *Maliks* placed his son Aram Shah on the throne. Iltutmish was not available on the spot and the throne could not be kept vacant till his return from Badaun. But Aram shah was inexperienced and incapable for which the nobles of Delhi felt that the infant Turkish Empire in India required the services of a capable ruler and invited Iltutmish to come to Delhi. After about 8 months Aram shah was defeated by Iltutmish in 1211. Infact, Aibak had called Iltutmish his son and made him the governor of Badaun signifying his wish to make him his successor. Hence, although many consider Iltutmish as an usurper actually there was no usurpation. According to the Islamic law, sovereignty belonged to the fittest person, which Iltutmish was. There was nothing like legal claim and hereditary succession among the Turks. All the nobles and governors contended for the throne and the best of them occupied it.

Iltutmish was the real first Turkish sultan of Delhi. He was recognised as the sultan of Delhi not only by the sultan of Ghur but also by the Khalifa. He made Delhi his seat of Government instead of Lahore. He ruled for long 26 years. The centre of political gravity shifted from Kanauj to Delhi, which continued as the political headquarters of India during the medieval period.

EARLY REVOLTS

Taking the advantage of the quarrel between Aram Shah and Iltutmish the other Turkish governors declared independence. Ali Mardan in Bengal (Lakshnawati), and Qubacha in Multan and Sindh declared their independence. The Rajputs mastered courage and raised their heads against the Turkish yoke and refused to pay annual tribute. Taj-ud-din Yulduz, the sultan of Ghazni reasserted his authority and claimed sovereignty over entire India. In Delhi, his position was far from being safe. Some of the nobles aligned with Aram Shah's party and opposed him. Thus, Iltutmish had to face may difficulties after his accession to the throne of Delhi. He faced them all with success.

Defeat of Yulduz

Taj-ud-din Yulduz was the sultan of Ghazni at the time of accession of Iltutmish to the throne. After the death of Aibak, Yulduz considered himself as the sovereign of entire Hindustan and treated Iltutmish as his vassal. As a mark of his sovereignty he sent Iltutmish a *Chatr* (canopy) and a *Durbash* (batton). Iltutmish accepted them diplomatically pretending to recognise his suzerainty to purchase time till he consolidated his position. In 1215 Yulduz was defeated and driven out of Ghazni by Khwarizm Shah. He came to Lahore and occupied the territories of Punjab upto Thaneswar and sent a message to Iltutmish to acknowledge him as an independent sovereign. Iltutmish hardly could afford to accept Yulduz over Punjab and marched against him. In January 1216 the two armies met at Tarain. Yulduz was defeated and imprisoned. He died inside the prison.

The victory over Yulduz not only eliminated one of his most powerful rivals but also led to the final break with Ghazni. Henceforth, the Sultanate of Delhi became an independent kingdom, independent of Ghazni, though not yet recognised by the Khalifa.

Defeat of Qubacha

After the defeat of Yulduz at the hands of Iltutmish, Nasir-ud-din Qubacha occupied Lahore once again and stopped paying tribute to Iltutmish. Iltutmish proceeded towards Lahore at the head of a large army in 1217. Qubacha fled to Sindh and Lahore was occupied by Iltutmish. Iltutmish refrained from entering into Sindh because of his anxiety to safeguard the northwestern frontier and political compulsions at Delhi. Qubacha, therefore, continued to rule over Sindh almost as an independent ruler till 1227.

When the Mongols drove Jalal-ud-din Mangbarni, the ruler of the Khwarizm Empire, out of his empire in 1221 he proceeded towards Sindh. He defeated Qubacha at Uch, though ultimately he returned back to Persia in 1224 A.D. The defeat of Qubacha in the hands of Jalal-ud-din encouraged Iltutmish to take advantage of the situation. He decided to finish the power of Qubacha once for all and simultaneously planned attacks on Multan and Sindh. Qubacha fled to the fort of Bhakkar in the lower Indus. Iltutmish besieged the fort and demanded an unconditional surrender from Qubacha. Qubacha offered to negotiate but Iltutmish refused and demanded unconditional surrender. Qubacha felt desperate and threw himself into the river Indus and was drowned. Iltutmish occupied both Multan and Sindh. Thus, another strong enemy of the sultanate was eliminated.

The Mongol Menace

The Mongols were nomadic hordes from the uplands of Tartary. They were not followers of Islam but were Shamanists by faith, which was a varied form of Buddhism. Though Buddhists, they were a terrible people who spread fire and sword in the Islamic world. Under their great leader Temujin, popularly known as Chengiz

Khan they created havoc in the central Asia. They destroyed the empire of Khwarizm Shah, one of the greatest Muslim rulers of his age and drove him out of his empire. He fled towards Caspian Sea and his heir apparent Jalal-ud-din Mangbarni fled towards Punjab. The Mongols chased Jalal-ud-din upto the river Indus. At Punjab Jalal-ud-din married the daughter of Sankin, the chief of Khakhar tribe and secured their assistance. Then he appealed to Iltutmish to help him against the Mongols. This put Iltutmish in a dilemma. When it was discourteous to refuse asylum to a princely refugee it was also equally dangerous to invite the wrath of a powerful invader like Chengez Khan who had reached the river Indus by 1220 A.D. Iltutmish played safe and refused to be involved with central Asian politics. So far Chengiz Khan had undisrupted success. Hence by refusing shelter to Jalal-ud-din, Iltutmish saved the Sultanate from Chengiz Khan who returned thereafter leaving the task of capturing Jalal-ud-din to his officers. However from Indian point of view it is considered the other way round. By avoiding Chengez Khan, Iltutmish saved himself but had he come to India and nipped the Sultanate in the bud then the Mongols unlike the Turks, would have gradually merged into Indian society as they were Buddhists and the history of India would have been different.

OTHER CONQUESTS

Recovery of Bengal

After the death of Qutb-ud-din Aibak, Ali Mardan, the Khilji ruler of Bengal severed his connection with

Delhi and declared himself independent. Thus, the province of Bengal was lost to the Delhi sultanate. Ali Mardan set up his independent rule in Bengal with his capital at Lakshnawati. His own rebellious officers put him to death because of his oppressive rule. Hasan-ud-din Iwaz Khilji with the title of sultan Ghiyas-ud-din became the ruler of Bengal. He was a successful ruler and earned a name for himself by his public welfare activities. He occupied Bihar and exacted tribute from the neighbouring kingdoms of Jajnagar, Tirhut and Kamarup.

Iltutmish being busy in the northwest could not pay attention towards the affairs of Bengal. In 1225-26 A.D. Iltutmish made a firm resolve to occupy the territory of Lakshnawati and started from Delhi. Ghiyas-ud-din avoided a war and concluded a treaty wherein he accepted the suzerainty of Iltutmish and presented 38 elephants 80 lakh of treasure and the name of Iltutmish was inscribed on his coins. Iltutmish withdrew from Lakshnawati leaving behind Malik Jani as the governor of Bihar and his own son Malik Nasir-ud-din Muhammad as the governor of Avadh (Oudh). No sooner had the sultan returned than Ghiyas-ud-din marched into Bihar and reoccupied it. In 1226 Nasir-ud-din Muhammad once again attacked Ghiyas-ud-din and killed him. Nasir-ud-din died in 1229 and there was again a revolution at Lakshnawati by Malik Ikhtiyar-ud-din Balka Khilji. This forced Iltutmish to proceed to Lakshnawati in 1230. Balka was defeated and killed and Bengal was re-annexed. Iltutmish separated the two provinces and appointed two governors, one for Bengal and the other for Bihar.

Conflicts with the Rajputs

Immediately after the death of Muhammad Ghori many Hindu rulers of Gangetic valley and Central India succeeded in recovering their lost territories. Qutb-ud-din Aibak avoided direct confrontation with them. The weak rule of Aram Shah further encouraged rebellious Rajput chief to become independent. As a result, by the time of Iltutmish many kingdoms had become independent. Iltutmish devoted the first fifteen years of his reign to suppress the Turkish nobles, face the Mongol invasion etc. He launched full-scale attacks against the Rajputs since 1226 and was determined atleast to recover the territories, which once formed a part of the Turkish Empire. In 1226 he proceeded towards the heart of Rajputana and occupied the famous fort of Ranthambhor, the pride of the Rajputs. In 1228-29 he captured Mandor the capital of the Paramaras. Then Udaysingh the ruler of Jalor was also forced to acknowledge the Turkish suzerainty and was allowed to continue as the ruler of Jalor on payment of tribute. Then Bayana, Thangir, Ajmer, Nagaur, Sambhor and the adjoining places were conquered in 1230. In 1231 Gwalior was occupied from the Pratihara ruler Devapala after a yearlong siege. In 1233 Kalinjar was occupied from the Chandella ruler Trilokya Varman. Then he led an attack against Nagada, the capital of Guhilots but suffered defeat in the hands of Rana Kshetrasingh. The Chalukyas of Gujrat also inflicted defeat on Iltutmish. In 1234-35 Iltutmish led an expedition to Malwa, plundered Bhilsa (Vidisha) and Ujjain and destroyed the ancient temple of Mahakal.

Conquest of Doab

The region between the rivers, Ganga and Yamuna is known as Doab. Many rulers of the region had regained their kingdoms before the coming in of Iltutmish. His eldest son Nasir-ud-din Mahmud was given the charge to recover the region. He succeeded in recovering Badayun, Kanauj, Banaras, Katehar and Baharaich in 1234. In 1235 Iltutmish attacked the Khokhars and occupied the town of Baniyan but failed to beat the Khokhars. However finally an exhausted Iltutmish returned to Delhi and died on 30th April. 1236.

INVESTITURE FROM THE KHALIFA

Iltutmish requested the Khalifa of Baghdad to grant him the title of Sultan. On 18th February 1229 a messenger from the Abbasid Khalifa Al-Mustansir Billah of Baghdad reached Delhi with the deed of investiture for Iltutmish. Iltutmish received this firman, which accorded a **legal recognition** and **spiritual sanction** to the Sultanate of Delhi as a part of Ghazni with great pomp and ceremony. It strengthened his position and ensured the succession of his offsprings to the throne. This settled the issue that Iltutmish was not an usurper to the throne. Hence, Iltutmish has been regarded as the first sultan of the Delhi sultanate.

HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Iltutmish has rightly been regarded as the **founder of Delhi sultanate**. He was the first to receive investiture from the Khalifa of Baghdad. He was the slave of a slave, yet by his own efforts he became the sultan of Delhi.

Iltutmish was a **patron of art and learning**. Because of Mongol invasion many scholars and artists who had fled from central Asia were provided shelter at the court of Iltutmish. The contemporary scholars like Minhaj-us-Siraj Taj-ud-din, Nizam-ul-Mulk Muhammad Junaidi, Malik Qutb-ud-din, Hasan-Ghwri and Fakhr-ul-Mulk Isami adorned his court. He is said to have built a college at Delhi and another at Multan. Infact a Maktab was attached to every mosque built by him.

Iltutmish made Delhi his political capital at the cost of Lahore. He built many Minarets, Mosques, Madrassas, Khanqas and tanks. He was responsible for the **completion of Qutb Minar** at Mehrauli, Delhi. The work of the Qutb Minar was started by Qutb-ud-din Aibak in honour of the famous Sufi saint Qutb-ud-din Bakhtiyar Kaki.

He was a **religious minded** person and a pious Sunni Muslim who observed the five daily prayers regularly. However, he was intolerant towards the Shia Muslims and the Hindus. He destroyed the Hindu temples at Bhilsa and Ujjain.

Iltutmish was a **courageous soldier** and an experienced military general. He, himself participated in many wars and because of his capabilities as a general, he succeeded.

He was not a **great administrator** and didn't create a civil institution. He laid the foundation of a military dictatorship and absolute monarchy in India. He made all the key appointments and did not permit the Turkish nobles to interfere in the affairs of the state beyond certain limits. Iltutmish created an entirely new class of ruling elite which comprised of his own Turkish slave officers headed by 40 powerful military leaders nicknamed as the "**Chalisha**" (Chihalgani or Chehalgan), 'the Forty'. They held charge of the *Iqtas* or regions into which the kingdom was divided and wielded great influence at the court. The administrative set up of *iqta* was his contribution to Delhi Sultanate. By introducing the system of transfer among the *Iqtadars*, he put an end to the hereditary feudalism.

He was the first Turkish ruler to introduce a purely **Arabic coinage**. He introduced the silver *tanka* and copper *jittal* in India. His silver *tanka* weighed 175 grains and bore an Arabic inscription on it.

The most notable achievements of Iltutmish were saving the infant Turkish kingdom from destruction, giving it for the first time a **legal status** and establishing a dynasty ensuring succession of his children to the throne of Delhi.

To quote Nizami, "Aibak had merely visualised an outline of the sultanate; Iltutmish gave it an individuality and a status, a motive power and a direction, an administrative system and a governing class". It is said, "The history of Muslim sovereignty begins with him."

Successors of Iltutmish

Iltutmish died in 1236 A.D. His greatest personal achievement was the initiation of a dynastic rule. It was his sheer ability, which earned him, an ex-slave almost a sacrosanct right to the crown through the Khalifa's investiture in 1229 A.D. However, inspite of the establishment of the dynastic rule there were no well-defined rules of succession, which generally followed the principle of "**the survival of the fittest**". Unfortunately, Iltutmish did not have capable successors. His eldest son Nasir-ud-din Muhammad who was the ablest among his children died in 1229. His next son Rukn-ud-din Firoze was a lover of sensual pleasures and easy living. His other sons were very young. Hence, there was a problem of succession. The struggle for succession was so acute that within 10 years after the death of Iltutmish four sultans of the dynasty were murdered and the fifth one ruled as a puppet in the hands of one of his slaves, Balban, who finally put an end to the dynasty and occupied the throne.

Iltutmish was aware of the weakness of his sons. Hence, after some hesitation he nominated his eldest daughter Raziya to succeed him as against his other grownup sons. Raziya was intelligent, courageous, and capable. She had been tested frequently when her father left her in charge of the government during his campaigns. But her nomination was not only against the Muslim law but also was opposed by her jealous brothers. The nobles or the '*Chalisa*' created by Iltutmish also opposed her initially. However, towards the end Iltutmish managed to secure their approval. When Iltutmish died his decision was reversed and the throne passed to his eldest surviving son Rukn-ud-din Firoze.

RUKN-UD-DIN FIROZE (April to November 1236)

Had Firoze been capable he could have possibly disarmed all opposition against him. But immediately after his accession in April 1236 A.D. he began a life of gaiety and pleasure, which provided an opportunity to his unscrupulous mother Shah Turkan to meddle in state affairs. Therefore, the people of Delhi alongwith the officers of the army supported the cause of Raziya. Firoze was arrested and put to death in November 1236 A.D.

RAZIYA BEGUM (1236-1240)

Raziya Begum was intelligent, courageous and capable. She received popular support. She was highly educated and was well trained in the statecraft. She was tested more than once when her father left her in charge of the administration during his campaigns. She possessed all the qualities befitting a ruler. She succeeded in crushing the nobles who opposed her succession. She was kind-hearted, liberal in religious outlook and unconventional in social habits. She was far ahead of her times in her mental make-up. She discarded female attire (*Purdah*), rode out in public, held open court and could overcome the disabilities attached to her sex by firmness and royal qualities. She appointed nobles out of her own choice, which often went against the 'Forty'.

The Ulemas of Delhi (Muslim theologians) who were hypnotised under the momentary spell of public excitement caused in favour of Raziya gradually started to oppose her. Similarly, the nobles (the Forty) could hardly tolerate the policy of concentration of all powers in her hands. The leaders of the conspiracy were Ikhtiyar-ud-din and Malik Altunia. Raziya married Altunia to befriend him. However, in spite of their joint effort she failed and was taken prisoner and killed on 13th October 1240 A.D.

MUIZ-UD-DIN BAHRAM SHAH (1240-1242)

Raziya Begum was succeeded by Muiz-ud-in Bahram Shah, the third son of Iltutmish. The nobles who expected their powers back raised him to the throne. However, he was deposed after two years by the same nobles and was killed in May 1242 A.D.

ALA-UD-DIN MASUD SHAH (1242-1246)

Ala-ud-din Masud Shah, the 16-year-old grandson of Iltutmish (son of Rukn-ud-din Firoze) succeeded Bahram Shah. He sat on the throne for four years but only as a puppet of the nobles. During his time 'the Forty' became all powerful. But one thing became clear that not a single noble among 'the Forty' was powerful enough to raise himself to the throne. Their mutual jealousy always kept one of the descendants of Iltutmish on the throne. The period of Masud Shah marked the rise of Balban as the power behind the throne.

NASIR-UD-DIN MUHAMMAD SHAH (1246-1266)

On 10th June 1246 Masud Shah was deposed and Nasir-ud-din Muhammad was placed on the throne. He has been described as the grand son of Iltutmish and posthumous son of his eldest son Nasir-ud-din Muhammad Shah. Out of affection Iltutmish gave him the same name of his father. The other view is that Nasir-ud-din Muhammad was another son of Iltutmish, which however, seems unlikely. The reign of Nasir-ud-din marked the end of the conflict between the sultan and the nobles. Nasir-ud-din never ruled. He remained only in name but the Turkish nobles and their leader Balban enjoyed the real power of the state. Balban gave his daughter in marriage to Nasir-ud-din. The surrender was absolute. He did not do anything to the displeasure of 'the Forty'. Balban rose as the single most important force during his reign. He became the *Wazir* and succeeded in maintaining the Sultanate in tact. He was the *de facto* ruler of the Sultanate.

In 1266 A.D. Nasir-ud-din had a sudden death. Balban is often blamed of murdering the sultan by poisoning him. It is also blamed that Balban murdered many other descendants of Iltutmish so that no claimant remained to the throne. Balban ascended the throne in 1266, which marked the end of the conflict between the sultan and 'the Forty'. The dynasty of Iltutmish came to an end and one of the nobles from 'the Forty' Ghiyas-ud-din Balban succeeded to the throne.

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GHIYAS-UD-DIN BALBAN
(1266-1287 A.D.)

Balban laid the foundation of a new dynasty called the second Ilbari or the Balbani dynasty. Baha-ud-din otherwise known as Ghiyas-ud-din Balban, was one of 'the Forty' Turkish nobles (*Chahalgani*) of sultan Iltutmish. He claimed descent from the illustrious line of Afrasiyab of Turan. The word Balban in the Turkish language means lion. His great grand father, Abar Khan belonged to the renowned Ilbari tribe of Turkey and was the chief of a clan of ten thousand families (Khans). He fell into the hands of the Mongols who sold him as a slave to Khwaja Jamal-ud-din of Basrah who brought him up like a son. In 1232, Iltutmish purchased and appointed him as a *Khasahdar* or Personal Attendant. He quickly rose to be one of the most trusted and powerful Turkish slave officers of Iltutmish. He was intimately related to the family of Iltutmish, as both Masud Shah and Nasir-ud-din were his sons-in law and his own son Bughra Khan was married to the daughter of Nasir-ud-din by his another wife. During the weak successors of Iltutmish he became further powerful. Bahram Shah granted the territories of Hansi and Rewari to him as personal estate.

Sultan Raziya appointed him to the post of *Amir-i-shikar* (in charge of royal hunt). But he betrayed her and was a party to depose her. He was singularly responsible for the succession of Nasir-ud-din Muhammad Shah to the throne in 1246 A.D. However, during his reign Balban practically enjoyed all the powers of the state except for a brief period of about one year. He was the *de facto* ruler with the titles of *Naib-i-mamlakat* and Ulugh Khan. Although Abu Bakr was *Wazir* yet Balban actively wielded all authority, as the former was his strong supporter. Only for a brief period of one year i.e. from 1253 to 1254 he was out of grace and out of power. Rayhan was appointed as the Prime Minister. He removed Balban along with all his supporters including the historian Minhaj, who was the Chief Qazi. Rayhan was an Indian Muslim not a Turkish noble. Hence, even though he was successful as a Prime Minister and popular among the masses he became the victim of a conspiracy and was dismissed by Nasir-ud-din Mahmmud in a years' time.

By his ability, tact and diplomacy Balban became the first among the Turkish nobles. Hence, after the death of Mahmud in 1266 all the nobles unanimously elevated Ghiyas-ud-din Balban to the throne of Delhi.

Balban was a wise and sagacious ruler, endowed with many rare virtues and talents. He was an experienced person in the art of government and directed the affairs of the state with discretion and judgement. It goes to his credit that he had passed through all the stages of authority, those of Amir, Malik and Khan and ultimately became the Sultan. He was deeply religious. He attached great importance to pomp and dignity to his court in manner of the kings of Persia. His effort was to raise the status of the Sultan above the nobles. He maintained royal dignity by issuing strict orders for the observance of etiquette by himself and his nobles.

Early Difficulties

Balban was faced with a number of political and administrative problems on his accession to the throne. Although he had been the *de facto* ruler for about twenty years, during the reign of Nasir-ud-din yet he had to face many problems when he himself became the sultan. As a matter of fact some of the problems were his own creation. After the death of Iltutmish owing to the weakness and incompetence of his successors the nobles became very powerful. There was erosion in the power of the sultans. Some of the sultans became puppets in the hands of the nobles and therefore were not respected by the people. Balban himself was one such noble who had captured power and made the Sultan Nasir-ud-din his puppet. Hence, it was his responsibility to restore the power of the crown, to keep the nobles under control and to strike terror among the general people.

The second problem that Balban faced was, the lack of security. The Mongol raids had increased since the death of Iltutmish. Some of the provincial governors had either become independent or had started creating serious problems. The powerful Hindu chiefs of Rajputana and central India had increased their military pressure. The royal treasury was almost empty and the revenue of the state was quite insufficient to meet the requirement. Hence Balban had to face these problems with firmness and at the same time establish his authority with shrewdness.

Theory of Kingship

Balban established the 'divine right of kings'. His theory of kingship had its origin in Persian Paganism. According to this, the kingship was the highest office in the world. It was the creation of the God and was received from the God alone. The king was the representative of the God on earth and the heart of the king reflected the glory of God. The king, therefore, must feel the importance and the significance of the glory and grandeur conferred up on him. The king must be brave, enterprising, just and benevolent. He must maintain his prestige and when these disappear there remains no distinction between a ruler and the ruled. Balban adopted the title of *Zil-i-Illahi* meaning the shadow of the God. His coins had the inscription of 'vice-regent of God on earth'. The king was above law. He believed in the sacredness of king's person. He pleaded inherent despotism, which, according to him, alone could exact obedience from subjects. In order to increase his personal prestige he claimed his descent from the mythical Turkish hero, Afrasiyab of Turan. In his private life he maintained high dignity and etiquette. On his accession he gave up drinking wine and refused to talk to common people. Even his private servants never saw him without properly clad in the royal robe. He himself never laughed in the public nor allowed any one to laugh before him. Thus, the rigid ceremonial dignity of Balban restored the prestige of the crown.

Stern discipline was enforced in the *Darbar*. The courtiers were forced to wear prescribed costumes made of fine silken, woolen and cotton garments studded with jewels, diamonds and gold ornaments. He adopted many practices of the Persian court such as *Zaminbos* (Sijda) and *Paibos* (Prostrating before the king and kissing his feet while on the throne), which left the visitors terror-stricken. He sat on a huge throne bedecked with rich drapery of precious diamonds. He forced his nobles to perform such practices with which he had once shared power of the state as a slave officer of Iltutmish. By doing this he conveyed the message to his ex-colleagues that they were his subordinates not 'king-makers'.

According to him the three essentials of kingship were the army, the treasury and the nobles. The means of success were justice, beneficence and pomp and show. The success of a king lay in the observance and fulfillment of four duties, such as to protect religion and to execute the provisions of the *Shariat*, to crush or minimise crimes, to appoint pious and God-fearing officers and to administer justice and equity.

Reorganisation of the Army

The stability and permanence of the government depended on the strength of the Army. A well-organised and well-equipped army must back an effective despotism. According to Balban a king must have under his command ten *Khans*, each *Khan* having ten *Maliks* under him, each *Malik* ten *Amirs*, each *Amir* tem *Sipahsalars*, each *Sipahsalar* ten *Sarkhil* and each *Sarkhil* ten horsemen or footmen.

Balban devoted about fifty percent of the revenue towards army. The soldiers were granted land (*Jagirs*) in lieu of their military service since the days of Qutb-ud-din Aibak. But on verification it was found that widows and orphans for no service to the state were enjoying many such Jagirs. He confiscated the land and gave it to new recruits. He granted pension of 20 to 30 *Tankas* to the war widows and orphans. However, this order could not be fully effective as many old *Jagir* holders protested before Malik Fakhr-ud-din, the Kotwal of Delhi who was a friend of Balban and on his interference the order regarding aged holders of land was cancelled.

Balban did not centralise his army. The governors and the nobles were free to organise their own army. He placed his army under the charge of Imad-ul-mulk, a very competent officer. He appointed a minister in charge of the army as *Diwan-i-ariz* who was made independent of the control of Finance Minister.

Balban did not engage himself in unnecessary military activities to avoid wasteful expenditure. He planned his expeditions himself and executed it with all secrecy and care. However, he kept his army well trained, well equipped and well paid for better results.

Destruction of 'the Forty'

Sultan Shams-ud-din Iltutmish had forty Turkish slaves who held positions of responsibility and command during his reign and were generally known as the *Chahelgani* or 'the Forty'. During the reign of the weak successors of Iltutmish the dignity and control of the state withered away and the power of the slave officials or 'the forty' increased. Balban himself was one of the forty slave officials of Iltutmish but when he came to power he tried to eliminate them all. Even when he was the *de facto* ruler as Naib during the reign period of Sultan Nasir-ud-din he tried to break their power. Individually he was the best among them and the rest were no match for him yet he was always afraid of their ambition and resourcefulness. He always apprehended danger from them and wanted to destroy the organization. As such they were themselves divided, none would obey the other and each of them aspired to be the sole master. Everyone said to the other as, "what are you, that I am not? And what you can be which I cannot?"

Balban considered the **assassin's dragger** as the only remedy to restore peace, order and absolute monarchy in the state. Balban was keen to establish absolute monarchy and the nobles were the greatest stumbling block. By the time Balban ascended the throne many of 'the forty' had already died. For the rest, he adopted repressive measures. Many of them were sent out of the capital on dangerous and risky assignments. He ordered frequent transfer of the governors to keep them always on the move. He promoted many junior officers, officers of his choice to high ranks and posted them against the vacant posts of 'the Forty'. He adopted a very stern and dominating approach towards the nobles. The governor of Badaun, Malik Baqbaq who had beaten one of his slaves to death was flogged publicly. Another influential noble and the governor of Awadh, Haibat Khan was ordered to be flogged with 500 stripes and then delivered to the widow of the slave whom he had stabbed to death in a drunken stage. Haibat Khan secured his release on payment of 20,000 tankas to the widow but felt so disgraced that he died very soon. Amir Khan, another governor of Awadh was hanged at the gate of the city of Ayodhya as he failed to suppress the revolt of Tughril Khan of Bengal. Sher Khan Sanqar the cousin of Balban was one of his trusted nobles who stood with him even when both were serving as slave nobles under Iltutmish. As governor of Bhatinda he fought against the Mongols very successfully. He however incurred the displeasure of Balban when he failed to turn up at Delhi to pay his personal respect at the time of his coronation. Balban became suspicious of him and poisoned him when he was sick in 1270 A.D.

This marked the end of "the Forty" and no powerful noble was left out to rival his despotism. There after he appointed his own supporters as nobles who were loyal to him. However the destruction of "the Forty" might have benefited Balban but sounded the death knell of Turkish race in India. He completely ignored the interest of the Turkish ruling class. By destroying the best talent among the Turks he weakened the race so much that when the Khiljis became competitors for the throne the Turks were easily beaten.

Spy System

Balban's absolute monarchy succeeded because he himself personally controlled the affairs of the administration. He didn't depend up on anyone nor did believe any one. There was no post of Naib under him though he was himself the Naib under Nasir-ud-din Muhammad. In any case Nasir-ud-din Mahmud had a Naib because he was weak but Balban was not weak enough to have the post of a Naib.

Balban set up a network of spies or news writers called Barids. The spies watched the activities of his governors, military and civil officials and even his own sons. Balban himself appointed them. They were well paid and had free access to the sultan in private. They were not supposed to meet him in the court or in the public. The spies who failed to give proper report were severely punished.

The efficient spy system of Balban struck terror in the hearts of the nobles and officials and strengthened the hands of the sultan.

Suppression of Revolts

The entire Sultanate period from 1206 to 1290 was generally devoted to re-conquering what Muhammad of Ghur had conquered but had been lost by his successors. There was a state of perpetual rebellion in different parts of India. The people of India had almost thrown off the Turkish yoke. Collection of taxes was a problem for the Turkish officers. People easily defied the government orders. The rebellious Rajputs made the life of the governors miserable. The robbers in the high ways and forests often plundered the people. Even the capital city of Delhi was not free from rubbers for which Balban had to close the city gates after the afternoon prayers. Hence, instead of making an organised and all out rebellion once for all the Indians had embarked up on the policy of creating a rebellious condition rather than a rebellion.

Balban adopted a defensive rather than offensive policy. He was not prepared to leave Delhi and go out on long campaigns to distant places. He was afraid of leaving Delhi for the fear of being deposed.

However his immediate problem was the restoration of law and order in Delhi, Doab and the trade route. Balban took immediate measures to provide security to the city of Delhi. The forests around Delhi were cleared of rubbers who were brutally killed. Four forts were built on four corners of Delhi and ferocious Afghan troops were placed there. Thus Delhi and its vicinity were freed of the rubbers. Balban's policy of blood and iron' bore fruit.

In 1267 A.D., Balban undertook the suppression of the insurrections in Doab and Oudh. The zamindars of the region had stopped payment of annual tribute and the people neither paid tax regularly nor permitted Muslim officials to collect them. The province was assigned to several powerful officers. Military commands and checkposts were established at several places. The Sultan himself visited the area twice and stayed there for about six months. Several thousands were put to death. Finally peace was restored in Doab.

The governors of Katchar and Badaun sent messages of similar rebellious attitude of the people to the Sultan. Balban himself marched with a strong army to subdue the rebels. The Sultan ordered a **whole-scale massacre of the inhabitants** of Katehar excluding women and children who were taken into slavery. He ordered the massacre of the entire male population of the area and burnt their fields. The extensive forest areas were cleared and thus the territories of Katehar, Badaun, Amroha, Sambal and Gunar were purged of rebels and rubbers.

The Mongol Invasions

The Mongols continued to invade the northwestern frontier provinces frequently. By the time of Balban the Mongols had occupied the region up to Lahore. Hence it was imperative on the part of Balban to safeguard his frontiers. His cousin Sher Khan Sanqar was placed in change of northwestern frontier province. He was successful in defending the region from the Mongol invasions but he died in 1270. In the same year Balban himself went to Lahore and ordered the construction of a number of strong forts on the frontier. Powerful forces were kept in these forts. He divided the entire frontier into two parts. The provinces of Lahore, Multan and Sindh were placed under the charge of his eldest son Muhammad Khan. The provinces of Sunam, Samana and Dipalpur were created as a second line of defense and were placed under his second son Bughra Khan, entitled Nasir-ud-din. Balban himself supervised the defense arrangements against the Mongols. A special force of 30,000 well-equipped cavalry was kept in reserve for the purpose. Some time later Bughra Khan was transferred to Bengal and the entire region was placed under Prince Muhammad Khan.

Prince Muhammad Khan was an able soldier, a competent administrator and a man of great literary taste. In his service two of the greatest poets of India writing in Persian, **Amir Khusrau** and **Amir Hasan** began their literary careers. He even sent an invitation to the greatest Persian poet of the time, Shaikh Sadi to come to India who however declined on the grounds of old age.

In 1285 the Mongol leader Timur Khan launched a major attack on Punjab. Prince Muhammad gave a bold fight but was killed in the battlefield in February 1286 A.D. The Mongols plundered the provinces of Lahore, and Dipalpur. However Kai Khusrau, the youthful son of Muhammad, protected the other provinces. Balban could not survive the shock of the untimely death of his son. As such he was in his eightieth year to be able to do anything about it. In any case he died in the middle of 1287 A.D. Hence his policies against the Mongols have not been successful.

Revolt in Bengal

Tughril Khan, one of the Turkish slave nobles was appointed as the governor of Bengal and Lakhnawati by Balban. In the year 1279 Tughril Khan revolted against Balban and declared independence taking advantage of Mongol invasion in the northwest frontier and the illness of the sultan himself. As a matter of fact Tughril Khan was one of the trusted slave officers of Balban. Balban sent Amin Khan, the governor of Oudh to suppress the rebellion. Amin Khan however was defeated. Balban ordered Amin Khan to be hanged at the gates of Oudh for his failure. Then in 1280 another army was sent under Tirmati Khan who was defeated by Tughril Khan. He was also beheaded at the orders of Balban for his failure. This brought a terror in the minds of his other generals. No one volunteered to go to Bengal, as the sultan wanted nothing short of victory.

Hence a perplexed and worried Balban himself marched towards Bengal with a vast army and was accompanied by his second son Bughra Khan. On hearing the approach of the sultan himself Tughril Khan lost heart and fled to the jungles of Jajnagar (Orissa). He had planned that when the sultan returns back he would recapture Bengal. But he was taken by surprise when the sultan chased him and proceeded towards

Jajnagar. Tughril Khan was captured and put to death. Balban returned to Bengal and inflicted a terrible punishment on the followers of Tughril. "On either side of the principal Bazar, in street more than two miles in length, a row of stakes was set up and the adherents of Tughril were impaled up on them. None of the beholders had ever seen a spectacle so terrible and many swooned in terror and disgust", writes Ziya-ud-din Barrani.

Balban appointed his son Bughra Khan as the governor of Bengal and advised him to remain faithful to him or else warned him to meet the same fate.

Administration of Justice

Balban was very **stern and persevering in the enforcement of justice**. He inflicted severe punishment up on careless and disobedient persons and was equally sympathetic for obedient and submissive people. In matters of justice he did not show any favour or partiality towards his relations, confidants and trusted officers. He ordered the governor of Budaun Malik Baqbak to be flogged in public for beating a servant to death. Similarly Haibat Khan, the governor of Avadh, in a drunken condition had stabed a man to death. It was ordered to whipp him 500 times and then delivered to the widow of the dead servant. His relations received his release on payment of 20,000 tankas to the widow. He often did not consider whether an action was permitted by the Shariat but dealt everything ruthlessly when it was not for the welfare of the kingdom. Consequently no one could gather courage to defy his orders.

Patronage of Learning

Many leading men of letters like Amir Khusrau and Amir Hasan graced the court of Balban. Amir Khusrau was the greatest Persian poet in India with the title of Parrot of India (Tut-i-Hind). Professors like Maulana Burhan-ud-din Malkh, Maulana Najm-ud-din, saints and mystics like Shaikh Sheukh-ul-Alam Farid-ud-din, Shaikh Badr-ud-din Ghaznavi, rare physicians and philosophers like Maulana Hamid-ud-din Mutraz, Maulana Hisam-ud-din Bazghaph adorned his court. Hearing of his liberality, scholars and poets came from different parts of the world and went back happy and contended.

Estimate

Balban occupied the throne at a time when the Turkish rule had been shattered beyond the possibility of reconstruction. The successors of Sultan Iltutmish had lost everything due to their addiction to pleasure, weak rule and mal-administration. There was no money in the royal treasury and no horse in the imperial stable. The Turkish nobles or 'the Forty' sought equality in every respect and were responsible for setting up and pulling down the governments in quick succession.

The position of Balban was insecure from rivals, revolts and hostility. Balban was an experienced hand that had experienced enough of joys and sorrows. He wanted to rule with a policy of blood and iron from the beginning. He protected the Sultanate from internal disorder and external dangers like the Mongol invasions. He decorated the court like the court of the Persian kings, reorganised the army and got rid of the members of 'the

Forty' by fair and foul means. The rebels were punished with unsparing severity. He saved the kingdom and at last peace, prosperity and profound tranquility reigned.

Balban propounded the 'Divine Right' theory of kingship. He was a stern despot and possessed a high sense of sovereign duty. He was ruthless in his approach, which struck terror in the minds of his officials and the people at large. He was harsh and cruel in inflicting punishment but was impartial and evenhanded. The requirement of the day was ruthlessness. Hence he was successful. He didn't hesitate punish two of his governs for their mistakes.

He was a believer of the racial superiority of the Turks and did not like the non-Turks and the Indian Muslims. He had faith in the blueblood superiority.

He was a military genius who hardly tolerated defeat in the war. Two of his nobles were hanged for their failure to defeat Tughril Khan the rebellious governor of Bengal.

Balban ruled for 22 years but could not extend the territories of his empire. He believed in the policy of consolidation rather than expansion. That was the requirement of the age. He revealed his stern sense of reality by abstaining from wars of aggrandizement and preferred consolidation to expansion. He was a great patron of learning. A galaxy of scholars, saints, mystics and poets adorned his court.

Balban was a rigid Sunni Musalman. He punctiliously discharged all the religious duties enjoined by Islam. He spent his leisure time in the company of saints and extended liberal patronage to them. He was very respectful towards the Ulemas but he did not permit them to interfere in the affairs of the state.

His was a transient dictatorship, which depended up on the ability and ferocity of one man. He did not introduce any administrative reorganization. As a statesman he, lacked both ability and vision. Balban was one of those unfortunate rulers who didn't have a competent successor. He left almost undisputed possession but no fit heir to carry on the government.

Successors of Balban

Balban established a strong monarchy but was not destined to perpetuate his ruling dynasty on the throne of Delhi. He died in 1287 A.D. after ruling for 22 years. The premature death of the crown prince Muhammad sounded the death knell of the dynasty. His second son Bughra Khan was so much disgusted with his father because of the reign of terror and the large-scale massacre in Bengal after the defeat of Tughril Khan that he didn't oblige his dying father by accepting his nomination to the throne. Therefore, Balban was constrained to nominate Kai Khusrau, the son of Prince Muhammad as his successor and died 3 days later.

After Balban's death the nobles led by Fakhr-ud-din, the aged Kotwal of Delhi did not honour the monarch's nomination and placed Bughra Khan's 17-year-old son Muiz-ud-din Kaiqubad on the throne. Kai Khusrau was sent out of the capital as the governor of Multan and Uchh.

Kaiqubad was brought up under the strict guidance of Balban himself. But soon after becoming the Sultan he indulged in sensual pleasures of wine and women. His courtiers who were sick of the restraints imposed by Balban also followed his example. Quite naturally the administration was neglected. Nizam-ud-din, a son-in-law of Fakhr-ud-din the Kotwal of Delhi who was simply a Dad Beg (city officer) virtually grabbed the power of the state and became the *Naib*. He started the game of liquidating his rivals and wanted to become the Sultan, though against the advice of his father-in-law. Kai Khusrau was murdered and many other officers were publicly humiliated. It created resentment among the nobility and many of them firmly opposed the authority of Nizam-ud-din.

Bughra Khan, the father of Kaiqubad interfered and succeeded in persuading his son to give up the life of luxury and make himself free from the influence of Nizam-ud-din. Kaiqubad followed the advice of his father and got rid of Nizam-ud-din by poisoning him. But unfortunately Kaiqubad suffered from a stroke of Paralysis and was incapacitated when he was hardly 20 years old.

The illness of Kaiqubad led to the outbreak of anarchy in the state. The rival factions of the nobles came into open clash with each other. In 1290 Jalal-ud-din Khilji, the governor of Samana occupied the throne of Delhi by a military coup and declared himself as the Sultan. Kaiqubad was killed and his infant son Kaimurs died in confinement in March 1290. Thus, ended the Slave dynasty, founded by Qutb-ud-din Aibak, and with it ended the period of the supremacy of the Turks in India. The Khiljis started a new dynasty under Jalal-ud-din Firoze Khilji.

The period of about 85 years from the accession of Qutb-ud-din to the rise of Jalal-ud-din Firoze Khilji was a period of dull monotony and full of wars of succession except for the two brief interludes i.e. the reigns of Iltutmish and Balban. These two Sultans made attempts at stabilising the position of the Sultanate. Even they could think only in terms of consolidation. Even these two rulers ruled out expansion of dominions as an impossible realisation.

Chapter - 14

THE KHILJIS

JALAL-UD-DIN FIROZE KHILJI (1290-96 A.D.)

Jalal-ud-din ascended the throne on 13th June 1290 with the title of Sultan Jalal-ud-din Firoze Shah Khilji. He started his career at Kilughari because of the animosity of the Turkish nobles and the people of Delhi.

ORIGIN

The Turkish nobles of Delhi did not welcome the assumption of power by Jalal-ud-din Khilji because they considered the Khiljis as non-Turks. But the Khiljis were originally one of the 64 clans of the Turks who had migrated to Afghanistan centuries ago and had settled at a place named Khilji on the banks of the river Helmand. From Khilji its inhabitants were known as Khiljis. Over the years they had adopted the Afghan socio-cultural traits for which they were often mistaken as Afghans. Fakhr-ud-din, the writer of Tarikh-i-Fakhr-ud-din Mubarakshai gives a list of 64 Turkish tribes in which he includes Turk, Ghuz, Khilji, Tatar, Ughus, Qai etc. The Khiljis came to India as soldiers in the armies of Mahmud of Ghazni and Muhammad of Ghur. In India they were regarded as being different from the Ilbari

Turks who were the ruling race. The throne of Delhi had been under the control of Ilbari Turks for about a century. Hence, there was resentment among the Turkish nobles when a person of so-called non-Turkish origin occupied the throne.

The family of Jalal-ud-din Khilji had migrated to India and had taken service under the Turkish sultans of Delhi. Jalal-ud-din had risen to the important position of *Sar-i-jandar* i.e. the head of the royal bodyguard and was finally appointed as the Governor of Samana. Later on he became the Army Minister under Kaiqubad.

There was no royal blood in the veins of the Khiljis. They were commoners whose accessions to the throne dealt a deathblow to the pseudo belief that sovereignty was the monopoly of the privileged. This ended the era of secondary citizenship for the Indian born Muslims. Jalal-ud-din occupied the throne by a coup, which had the support of neither of the people, nor of the nobility nor even of the Ulemas. The Khiljis even did not seek the recognition of the Khalifa for themselves. They proved the fact that the state can exist successfully even without any religious support. Hence, the accession of Jalal-ud-din Khilji was not a mere change of dynasty; it signified a revolution in the Muslim politics in India. It marked the end of racial discrimination among the Muslims of India. It sounded the death-knell of the privileged Turkish nobility and the ruling elite.

Nature

Jalal-ud-din sat on the throne at the ripe age of 70. Hence, the weaknesses of old age affected his attitude and activities. He had lost interest in the battles and followed a very liberal policy. He tried to please the

Turkish nobles and allowed them to enjoy their previous posts. He ruled for 6 years but never considered himself fit to sit on the throne of his master, Balban. His humility and tenderness won applause from the common man but the Khilji nobles who had helped him to rise to power were frustrated and demoralised. They desired to be appointed to top ranking positions carrying power, prestige and money. Some of them charged him with senility. Some of them pronounced him unfit for the throne and tried to remove him. His nephew and son-in-law, Ala-ud-din Khilji became the leader of the disgruntled party and finally occupied the throne by killing him.

Revolt of Malik Chhajju

In August 1290 Malik Chhajju, the chief survivor of Balban's family raised a standard of revolt against Jalal-ud-din with the help of the refractory Hindu zamindars of the Gangetic valley. He occupied a small territory and assumed the title of sultan Mughis-ud-din. He was however defeated and taken prisoner by Jalal-ud-din. In another occasion a religious leader Sidi Maula who was an aspirant for the throne was captured and killed.

INVASIONS

Ranthambhor

Jalal-ud-din did not indulge too much in aggressive warfare. In 1290 he led his first campaign against Ranthambhor. The Chauhan ruler of Ranthambhor, Rana Hamir Deva gave a stiff resistance. Realising his inability to defeat the Rana, Jalal-ud-din returned back sayings that he did not consider the fort, worth a single hair of a Muslim's head. In 1292 he undertook an expedition against Mandawar, which had once belonged to Delhi but had been recovered by the Rajputs. It was, however, recaptured by Jalal-ud-din.

War against Mongols

In 1292 A.D. Abdulla, a grandson of Halaku Khan of Persia advanced with a force of one lakh fifty thousand Mongols. Jalal-ud-din proceeded as far as Sunam. In a battle on the banks of river Sindh the Mongols were defeated and a large number of them were taken prisoner. Abdulla made peace with Jalal-ud-din and returned leaving thousands of Mongol prisoners who embraced Islam and were allowed to settle down in India. Even Jalal-ud-din offered the hands of one of his daughters to their leader Ulugh Khan, a descendent of Chengiz Khan. The Mongol converts were called **'Neo Muslims'** and their settlement near Delhi came to be known as Mughalpura.

Bhilsa

Two more expeditions were undertaken during his reign, which were led by his youthful nephew and son-in-law Ala-ud-din Khilji, the governor of Kara since 1291. In 1292 Ala-ud-din led a surprise attack on Bhilsa, situated on the road to Ujjain. He plundered the city and brought huge booty of gold, silver, elephants and horses to Delhi. For his success he was appointed as the Ariz-i-malik, the Minister of war.

Devagiri

The success of Bhilsa encouraged Ala-ud-din to plan bigger expeditions. The prosperity of the country of

Devagiri or Deogiri (Daulatabad in modern Maharastra) attracted him. He made an elaborate preparation for the war and collected all possible information on Devagiri from the travelers and spies. On 26th February 1296 Ala-ud-din marched with 8000 picked cavalry towards Devagiri. He started towards Chanderi, then took a sharp turn towards the south, crossed the Vindhyas and reached Devagiri. The ruler of Devagiri Raja Ramachandra Deva was taken by surprise. The best part of his army was engaged in further south under the crown Prince Singhana fighting against the neighbouring kingdoms. Hence, a non-pulsed Ramachandra Deva surrendered and allowed Ala-ud-din to plunder the city.

Murder by Ala-ud-din

The success of the expedition and the wealth of Devagiri made Ala-ud-din ambitious. He did not want to part with the fabulous wealth, which he had acquired by his own capacity. He avoided a visit to Delhi and succeeded in persuading the sultan to come to Kara to receive the booty. Against the advice of his nobles Jalal-ud-din proceeded to Kara to meet his nephew and son-in-law Ala-ud-din. On 20th July 1296 Ala-ud-din treacherously murdered Jalal-ud-din who had come to meet him leaving behind his army and bodyguards. After the murder of Jalal-ud-din, Ala-ud-din captured Delhi on 22 October 1296 and declared himself as the sultan of Delhi.

ALA-UD-DIN KHILJI (1296-1316 A.D.)

Ali Gurshasp, otherwise known as Ala-ud-din was the eldest son of Shihaḅ-ud-din Masud Khilji, a brother of Jalal-ud-din Khilji. Shihab-ud-din had four sons, Ali Gurshasp, Alams Beg, Utlugh Tighin and Muhammad. Nothing is known about the last two. Shihab-ud-din probably died much before the accession of Jalal-ud-din as no mention has been made about him anywhere. Ali Gurshasp was brought up under the care of his uncle Jalal-ud-din.

Childhood

The details of Ala-ud-din's childhood and youth are buried in obscurity. No contemporary writer gives the date of his birth. Only Haji-ud-dabir, an early seventeenth century historian says that Ala-ud-din was thirty-four years of age when he went to conquer Ranthambhor in 1300-1301, which places his birth in 1266. He did not receive proper education but grew up to be a brilliant warrior. He was extremely ambitious, aggressive and selfish by nature.

Ala-ud-din played an active role in the Khilji coup d' etat, which placed Jalal-ud-din in the throne of Delhi in 1290. Consequently Ala-ud-din, who was his nephew as well as son-in-law, was appointed as Amir-i-tuzuk or the Master of the Ceremonies. His younger brother Alams Beg who was also a son-in-law of Jalal-ud-din, was appointed as Amiri-i-akhur or master of the Royal Stable. Ala-ud-din proved his worth in the suppression of Malik Chhajju and was rewarded with the governorship of Kara in 1291. This appointment proved to be the turning point in his career. In 1292, with the permission of Jalal-ud-din he led an expedition against Bhilsa. The success of the expedition earned him the exalted office of Ariz-i-Mumalik or the Minister of War and was given the charge of the *iqta* of Oudh in addition to Kara.

Family Life

His family life was not very happy. He had two wives, one was the daughter of sultan Jalal-ud-din and the other was named Mahru who was a sister of Malik Sanjar, a close friend of Ala-ud-din. Mahru was his favorite wife whereas his other wife, the daughter of Jalal-ud-din was so proud of her father's position that she tried to dominate which Ala-ud-din did not relish, but at the same time was careful enough not to bring it to the notice of the sultan. However, he always had a sense of humiliation. Malika-i-Jahan, the chief queen of sultan Jalal-ud-din and mother -in –law of Ala-ud-din made him still more miserable by her behaviour and by her support to her daughter.

His appointment as the Governor of Kara brought him in contact with the dissatisfied military officers and *Amirs* who had helped Malik Chhajju to raise a standard of revolt. They regarded Jalal-ud-din as an usurper and a weakling and intended to remove him from the throne. Following the footsteps of Jalal-ud-din, Ala-ud-din took some of them into his service. They advised Ala-ud-din to gather a strong army at Kara and to occupy Delhi. They emphasised the point that money was very essential for the purpose and that Malik Chhajju had failed for want of sufficient resources. In 1296 Ala-ud-din led a successful expedition to Devagiri where he acquired fabulous wealth by way of plunder as well as a large war indemnity which consisted of 600 *mans* of gold, 7 *mans* of pearls, 2 *mans* of precious stones, 1000 *mans* of silver and 4000 pieces of silk articles. With the acquisition of wealth his ambition soared high. In the Devagiri expedition Ala-ud-din had acted in an independent manner and had not obtained the sultan's permission to invade Devagiri. The success of the expedition and the wealth of Devagiri made Ala-ud-din ambitious. He did not want to part with the fabulous wealth, which he had acquired by his own capacity. He avoided a visit to Delhi and succeeded in persuading the sultan to come to Kara to receive the booty. Against the advice of his nobles Jalal-ud-din proceeded to Kara to meet his nephew and son-in-law Ala-ud-din. On 20th July 1296 Ala-ud-din treacherously murdered Jalal-ud-din who had come to meet him leaving behind his army and bodyguards. Thus, Ala-ud-din hatched a conspiracy and Jalal-ud-din fell a victim to the treachery of his beloved nephew and son-in-law. He was murdered on 20th July 1296. And on the same day Ala-ud-din was proclaimed as the sultan. He distributed various titles and honours among his trusted officers. He conferred upon his brother Alams Beg the title of Ulugh Khan, on Malik Sanjar the title of Alp Khan and a host of others received titles and honours.

Ala-ud-din took three months to reach Delhi. The Jalali nobles alongwith Malika-i-Jahan, the Chief Queen of Jalal-ud-din tried to keep Delhi under their control. Khan-i-Khana, the eldest son of Jalal-ud-din had died in 1290. His second son Arkali Khan was at Multan. As he was not immediately available at Delhi, the Chief Queen committed the mistake of declaring her third son Qadr Khan as sultan with herself as his regent. Many did not like this. Ala-ud-din marched towards Delhi with 1,00,0000 soldiers and entered the capital on 28th October 1296. He assumed the title of **Abul Muzaffar sultan Ala-ud-duniya-va-din Muhammad Shah Khilji**. He took up his residence in the Red palace, Kaushak-i-Lal where Balban formerly resided. He gained the support of the Jalali officers by opening the chests of his treasures and liberal distribution of gold and silver and by conferring upon them high offices of the state. All the soldiers were granted 6 months salary as reward. Public festivities at the state expense continued for weeks. Visitors to the capital as well as its inhabitants received liberal gifts from the sultan. Thus, he purchased the support of the people and no one ever mentioned of the crime he committed.

Immediately after the occupation of Delhi, Ala-ud-din wanted to put an end to the Jalali family. Arkali Khan, the eldest surviving son of Jalal-ud-din was at Multan. He dispatched 40,000 soldiers under Ulugh Khan and Zafar Khan for the purpose. Not only Arkali Khan but also all other surviving members like Qadr Khan and Malika-i-Jahan the chief queen were captured and put to death after some time. Some of the officers were blinded and some others were thrown into prison. Thus, all his rivals were disposed off.

Theory of Kingship

Ala-ud-din was the first sovereign of the sultanate period who conquered a vast empire, which included territories of north as well as south India. He was not only a great conqueror but also a great administrator, which enabled him to maintain the vast empire.

Ala-ud-din believed in the despotic monarchy with unlimited powers for the sovereign. He therefore revived Balban's theory of divine right of kingship i.e. the monarch being the God's representative on earth. He declared himself as **Zil-i-Illahi** or shadow God on earth. He had a firm conviction that greater wisdom was given to the Sultan than to any other human being. The will of the sultan was law and the sultan was above law and all powers of the state emanated from the sultan.

Ala-ud-din did not allow the Ulema to interfere in matters of the state. He was the first Sultan of Delhi who did not feel it necessary to invoke the name of the Khalifa to justify his authority and claim to sovereignty. He **never applied for the investiture of the Khalifa**. However, he continued to style himself as 'Yamir-ul-Khilafat Nasiri Amir ul momin' as a matter of mere formality than necessity. He was the first sultan of Delhi who did not pursue Islamic principles in matters of the state. He once said to Mughis-ud-din, the Qazi of Bayana, "Maulana Mughis, though I have no knowledge and have read no book, still I was born a Musalman and my ancestors have been Musalmans for so many generations. To prevent rebellions in which thousands of lives are lost, I give such orders to the people as I consider being beneficial to them and the state... I issue commands, which I consider to be beneficial to the state and are prudent under the circumstances. I do not know whether they are permitted by the Shariat or not". Thus Ala-ud-din **brought the church under the control of the state.**

However Ala-ud-din did not believe in the principle of secular state nor did he believe in the fact that religion had anything to do with politics. Nevertheless he had realised his limitation that he was a Muslim ruler of a non-Muslim land and was aware of the fact that he could only govern on principles acceptable to the Hindus. He was a Sunni Muslim who advocated adherence to the faith. Instead of being secular he always applied discriminatory laws of Islam very rigidly against the Hindus more than any other sultan before him. He was partial towards Muslims. But at the same time he was against an incessant Jihad against the Hindus. It was not an ideal policy to persecute the nonbelievers in a

Hindu dominated country. Political expediency demanded religious toleration. Hence under Ala-ud-din the temporal power completely eclipsed the ecclesiastical. Of course Ala-ud-din did not antagonise Mullas by his policies. They continued to receive liberal stipends and honours. All the judicial and educational posts were reserved for them.

During the Sultanate period the nobility exercised great influence on the Sultans. He believed in the theory that 'kingship knows no kingship'. He was highly self-willed and had the capability to act as an absolute monarch without depending upon the advice of his nobles. He struck terror in the hearts of his nobles, generals and other elite for which no one dared to give him any advice. During the initial years of his reign he distributed lavish wealth among his nobles to win over their support in consolidating his position. But once he felt secure and firmly entrenched, on the throne he assumed *a volte-face* and went after the nobles from whom he had benefited a short while ago. As a matter of fact some of these nobles had betrayed their old masters on receipt of rich rewards from him. He declared them to be undependable, took back the gold and silver which he had himself given and finally punished some of them. He established complete dominance over the nobility so that none of them could grow powerful.

The sultan was at the apex of the administrative machinery. He was the commander-in-chief of the army and the supreme judicial and executive authority. In his administration the people had no rights, only obligations and were required to carry out his commands. The sultan was an unlimited despot, bound by no law, subject to any material check and guided by no will except his own.

In the field of administration he did not bring about radical changes or introduce innovative ideas. He executed his ideas properly and that succeeded.

ADMINISTRATION

He was assisted by a number of ministers and officers in his administration. There were four important ministers who formed the four pillars on which his administrative edifice rested. They were (i) *Diwan-i-Vazarat* (ii) *Diwan-i-Arz* (iii) *Diwan-i-Insha* and (iv) *Diwan-i-Rasalat*. The chief minister was called *Vazir*. His primary function was to collect land revenue from the crown lands (*Khalsa*) and tribute from the vassal Princes. Ala-ud-din appointed Khvaja Khatir to the office of the *Vazir*. Later Musrat Khan was appointed as *Vazir* in 1297. The *Diwan-i-Arz* was the Minister of War. His duty was to recruit troops, to disburse salaries, to look after equipment and efficiency of the army etc. but he was not the Commander-in-chief of the campaigns. Malik Nasir-ul-Mulk Siraj-ud-din was the Diwan-i-Arz. The responsibility of the Diwan-i-Insha was to draft royal proclamations and dispatches, to communicate to the provincial governors and local officers and to maintain government records. Kabir-ud-din was the *Diwan-i-Insha*. The *Diwan-i-Rasalat* was in-charge of foreign and diplomatic correspondence. Ala-ud-din himself was in-charge of foreign affairs for some time.

Justice

Ala-ud-din personally administered justice in the open court in traditional sultanate style. He constituted the chief court of appeal to which everybody had access.

Next to the sultan the line of judiciary consisted of religious persons. Justice was administered quickly and promptly. *Qazis* were treated with great respect. They could punish even powerful officials. Punishments were extremely severe. Decapitation, mutilation of limbs, imprisonment and flogging were common forms of punishment.

Spy System

Ala-ud-din organised an efficient police and intelligence system. The chief of the intelligence department was the *Barid-i-Mumalik*. He had under him a number of *Barids* who collected information for the sultan. They were the ears and eyes of the sultan. The *Kotwal* was the police officer that had extensive power. Nusrat Khan and Malik Ala-ul-mulk were two important *Kotwals* who had great influence on Ala-ud-din.

Postal System

Ala-ud-din organised an efficient postal service, which connected different parts of the empire. Posts were established at regular distances, which dispatched letters on horsemen (*Ulaq*), or footman (*Dhara*). These post stations also sent reports to the king on the progress of the army in that particular road.

Revenue Administration

The credit of taking definite steps to organise land revenue goes to Ala-ud-din. He reorgansied the revenue department and tried to infuse vigour into the existing system. The overall charge of the department was the *Vazir*. Khwaja Khatir was his first *Vazir* but within one year Nusrat Khan replaced him, as Ala-ud-din preferred to appoint a military general for the post. Malik Kafur was one of his successful *Vazirs*. The appointment of military generals as *Vazirs* enhanced the prestige of the office. Ala-ud-din introduced the system of the measurement of the land to have a correct assessment of the produce and to determine the exact amount that was due to the government. Assessment of revenue on the basis of measurement was neither new to the Turks nor was an innovation for the Indians. Because of the requirement of elaborate machinery, the Turks had not adopted it. Ala-ud-din ordered the collection of revenue uniformly on the basis of measurement. *Biswa* was the unit of measurement.

After fixing the method of assessment Ala-ud-din turned his attentions towards the agencies of revenue collection. He abolished the system of middlemen and made arrangement for the collection of revenue directly from the cultivators through the government officials. The inter-mediaries like the *Khuts, Muqaddams* and *Chaudharies* were greatly affected by this policy. Even the *Iqtadars* or Provincial heads were relieved from the work of revenue collection.

Ala-ud-din had rightly diagnosed that the wealth was the major cause for the insubordination of the Zamindars and *Iqtadars* who acquired wealth by way of collection from the land revenue. They collected excessive taxes from the peasants but entered fewer amounts in the revenue returns to the royal treasury as a result of which the taxpayers suffered, the royal treasury received less and the intermediaries benefited. By a stroke of pen Ala-ud-din abolished Zamindari system and land revenue began to be collected by the officers of the sultan directly.

Ala-ud-din appointed a number of officers like *Amils, Gumasthas and Muhassils* for the collection of the revenue. He fixed a good salary for the revenue officials to give them respectability and to prevent corruption among them. The state share was 50% of the produce as the land revenue, which was to be collected in kind.

Besides the land revenue Ala-ud-din collected other taxes like *Karahi* (house tax) and *Charai* (grazing tax). There was the *Zakat* or the religious tax levied only on the Muslims, which they had to pay as an obligation between God and man. Similarly *Jiziya* was collected from the non-muslims who had to pay on the basis of number of members in a family except the woman, children, insane and the imbecile. *Jiziya* was one of the major taxes. Hence, many sultans who were more interested in money did not favour conversions to Islam as it meant loss of revenue to the state.

He abolished jagirs and confiscated their land. He also stopped the practice of issuing grants of land in lieu of state service. The Jalali nobles were deprived of their lands, which they had received in *inam* or waqf. The holders of these *inams* or waqfs considered it as their right to hold land not as a favour of the monarch. He abolished the entire system.

MARKET CONTROL REGULATIONS

Ala-ud-din followed a vigorous imperialistic policy and at the same time had the anxiety to protect his kingdom from the Mongol menace. Besides, he had to regularly put down the internal rebellions at regular intervals. And all this required a huge standing army. Not only that he wanted a permanently maintained vast army but also he wanted to keep the morale of the soldiers high by keeping them contented, well fed, well dressed, wel paid and well armed. His soldiers were not ordinary soldiers but the favoured children of the sultanate up on whose faithful and efficient service depended the safety of the crown. He wanted to increase the strength of his army without adversely affecting the royal treasury. Therefore he introduced the system of paying his soldiers a moderate salary in cash for the first time. His successful military exploits, which resulted in excessive flow of wealth to the kingdom, caused inflation. He was caught in the vicious circle of inflation and price rise. As against this, he desired to keep his soldiers happy and contented with a fixed salary. Hence in order to prevent them from falling victim to economic distress, he decided to reduce the prices of the commodities of daily use. "**It was simple arithmetical calculation and simple economic principle. Since he had decided to reduce and fix the salary of the soldiers, he also decided to reduce and fix the prices of things of common use**".

Ala-ud-din issued a very comprehensive list of articles, which included food grains, bread, vegetables, cloth, slaves, cattle, horses, and various articles of merchandise whose prices were controlled and fixed at a particular rate. He also ensured the regular supply of such articles at a fixed price without any inconvenience. The fixation of price was not done in an arbitrary way. It was extremely difficult to calculate these prices in terms of modern currency. The villagers used to sell their produce in the *Mandi* at the Government rates. The rates so fixed must have been profitable to them. Hence, the prices of the articles fixed by Ala-ud-din were certainly not below the normal prices. He only ensured that there was no increase in the price and the supply was guaranteed. He prevented the businessmen from manipulating the prices.

Such a comprehensive control over prices and supply required strict vigilance for which he set up a new department to look after the affairs of the market. The overall charge of the market was given to Malik Qabl Ulugh Khan with the title of *Shahna-i-mandi.* He was granted a large *Iqta* with a contingent of horses and a large number of soldiers to enforce the regulations. He was provided with a number of assistants or *Naib Shahnes* to assist him. The *Barid-i-Mandi* was the officer who reported to the sultan on the quality and the prices of the articles. In case of any discrepancy the concerned officers were punished.

Ala-ud-din seems to have fully recognised that the stability of the prices depended on adequate supply of articles. Having fixed the prices of food grains the sultan established a grain market and some government grain stores from where the people and the merchants could obtain foodstuff. To ensure the steady supply of foodstuff to the government stores he ordered that the land revenue from the *khalsa* land and the Doab region were to be collected in grains and sent to Delhi. The grain dealers and the caravanians dealing with grain were to be governed under strict rules. The grain dealers of Delhi were required to sign a deed of mutual security and to keep their family and property in the villages bordering on Yamuna and placed them as security for their honesty. The caravanians were required to register themselves with the *Shahna* or the superintendent of the market. Their movement was regulated till the delivery of the articles in the markets of Delhi. As a result of these strict regulations, the shopkeepers of Delhi looked at it with disgust and the caravanians stopped coming to the city. The cultivators were prevented from hoarding and the local magistrates were required to ensure that the caravanians were allowed to purchase as much grain from the cultivators as possible.

The steady supply of food grains was likely to be affected by another factor i.e. the weather condition. The natural calamities like flood and draught affected the production and interrupted the supply. As a counter balance against such problems the sultan established a buffer stock and government storehouses. These granaries were kept well stocked to be released in time of emergency.

During favourable seasons people could buy as much as they liked. In times of scarcity, due to natural calamities, the supply of food grain was rationed. The system of rationing was a novel idea of Ala-ud-din.

The sultan established separate markets for different commodities needed by the soldiers such as the markets for horses, cattle, sweets, slaves, spices, fruits, weapons, shoes etc. The government issued permits to the local horse dealers to purchase quality horses from the traders of far off lands and to sale them in the market at a fixed price. All the markets were regulated in the line of grain market. Malik Yaqub was appointed as the *Diwan-i-Riyasat* or controller of the cloth market. The cloth market was located in a building called *Sarai adl* near Badayun gate. There was a long list of silk and cotton fabrics whose prices were fixed by the crown. Like food grain and cloth markets, rules were also framed for other markets. Prices were fixed for each big and small item. The prices of different commodities were interconnected. If the prices of wheat, ghee and sugar were controlled so were the prices of the sweets.

The market officials were vested with extensive power to regulate the prices against the will of the traders, who for long had been enjoying liberal profits. Ala-ud-din ordered very severe punishments for the contravention of price control measure. However, in spite of all these measures the merchants continued to cheat the customers. The short weight trick was the most commonly practised method of cheating, besides the changing of items like glass beads to diamonds. The corresponding punishments were equally severe. If a trader was found using short weight trick a quantity of flesh equal to deficiency to weight was cut from his haunches.

Adverse effects

The market regulation of Ala-ud-din did not permit enough profit to the traders. Consequently it did not encourage trade and commerce. Not only trade and commerce but also agriculture was also adversely affected. They were required to pay fifty percent of the produce in kind as land tax and were compelled to sell the grain at fixed rates to the caravanians and to the government stores. However, they were relieved of the responsibility of taking their grain to the markets. A peasant was not likely to be a hoarder. But he was forced to sell his produce at a fixed price. There was no scope of making profit, which was the greatest hurdle for production. Even the peasant was not allowed to store some food grain just for security against bad season.

While framing the market regulations the motive of the sultan may not have been to punish the poor peasants. His targets were the traders and the middlemen but in the process the interest of the cultivators was sacrificed for the protection of the army.

Two pertinent questions arise out of these regulations. The first is, whether they were meant to benefit only the army or the people as a whole? Secondly, whether these economic measures were confined to the capital city of Delhi alone or extended to the entire empire? According to Barrani the soldiers and government servants with fixed income benefited out of it. If some others in Delhi also benefited out of it that was just accidental. The soldiers in the army formed only a small portion of the humanity. The peasants, the manufactures and the traders who were law-abiding citizens were neglected. Even for the soldiers the benefit was not much. If prices were reduced so were their salaries.

According to Barrani the jurisdiction of the regulation was confined to the city of Delhi although at times “the city” becomes ‘cities’. The officers connected with the regulations were restricted to Delhi only. The traders were required to register themselves at Delhi. Regulations did not extend beyond the jurisdiction of Delhi.

Ala-ud-din’s market regulations died with him. He failed to keep the interest of the people above his political interest. As a matter of fact no Turkish sultan of India could afford to keep the happiness and prosperity of the peasants and traders above those of his army. Ala-ud-din was no exception. The most remarkable part of the regulation was the way with which it was implemented. His son Qutb-ud-din did not feel obliged to enforce the regulation. There was neither the will nor the capacity, nor the necessity of enforcing them. Qutb-ud-din was not so fond of conquests. The Mongol storm had subsided. Hence, there was no need to maintain a vast army. The market control was a temporary measure, resorted to in a state of exigency. When the emergency was over the regulations fell into disuse and collapsed like a house of cards.

Military Reforms

According to Ziya-ud-din Barrani two pillars such as administration and conquest sustained the kingship and both the pillars required the support of the army. In the medieval India the success of a king depended up on the strength of his army. An empire builder like Ala-ud-din could hardly neglect his army. He was determined to organise a vast army from the very beginning. Internal rebellions and external dangers like the Mongol invasions also often bothered him. Hence Ala-ud-din had no other option but to have a strong army for his own existence.

Ala-ud-din has the credit of being the first sultan of Delhi to lay the foundation of a **permanent standing army**, which was always kept in readiness at the capital. All the sultans prior to him depended upon the forces of the provincial Nobles and Feudatory Chiefs for strengthening their forces at the time of necessity. Ala-ud-din put an end to this dependency and recruited his own army; trained them, equipped them and paid them lavishly.

According to Barrani, Ala-ud-din gave special attention to the construction of new forts and repair of the old ones. The forts provided home for the troops and guarded the frontiers. As the army was the strength of the empire, the forts were the strength of the army.

The army consisted of many classes of soldiers. Firstly there were the royal bodyguards called, *Jandars* who were under the direct control of the sultan and were on permanent employment. Secondly there were the regular soldiers of cavalrymen and foot soldiers who formed the standing army. Thirdly, there were the special recruits who were enrolled in times of war from among the Hindus as well as Muslims.

The army minister, Ariz-i-Mamalik, directly recruited the army. According to Firishta, the sultan's army consisted of 4,75,000 cavalrymen and the strength of the infantry must have been much more than that. Good quality horses and elephants were supplied to the cavalrymen and elephant riders. All the soldiers were given proper training and weapons like swords, bows and arrows, mace and battle-axes. Each soldier carried two swords and some other weapons.

Ala-ud-din's army was set up in Turkish mode. A **Sarkhail** commanded ten horsemen, a **Sipahsalar**, ten Sarkhails, an **Amir** ten Sipahsalars, a Malik ten Amirs and a **Khan** ten Maliks. However, the number was not the exact one but in a generic sense it expressed the status of different officials of the army.

Ala-ud-din adopted some novel reforms to check corrupt practices in the army. Some of the regular soldiers sometimes used to send proxy soldiers in their place to the military review or even to the battlefield. These soldiers were untrained. Ala-ud-din instituted the practice of recording descriptive roll or ***huliya*** of the individual soldiers in the register of the Army Minister. Secondly at times the soldiers used to replace good horses by ordinary horses or used to send the same horse repeatedly at the time of inspection. Ala-ud-din introduced the system of ***dagh*** or branding of horses. The war minister kept a record of all of them. These innovations were completely new in India though it existed outside India in different countries. A strict review of the army was regularly held where horses, arms and soldiers were thoroughly examined.

The soldiers were paid in cash from the royal treasury. The soldier with one horse (*yak-aspa*) was paid 234 *tankas* per anum while a soldier with two horses (do-aspa) was paid 78 *tankas* more for maintaining the second horse. Firishta says that there were three grades of soldiers who were paid 234 *tankas*, 156 *tankas* and 78 *tankas* respectively. The salary of the soldiers as it seems was quite meager. Ala-ud-din was not in a position to pay more to his soldiers as he maintained a vast army. But at the same time he was very keen in keeping his army contented. He was particular about the welfare of the soldiers. However, he was opposed to assign land (Jagir) to the soldiers for their maintenance. Hence, he devised a well-laid out market control policy by which he made strenuous efforts to provide the basic necessities of the soldiers within fixed and reasonable price. Needless to mention that he succeeded in his endeavor but the effort was disproportionate to his desire. Hence, the system collapsed immediately after him.

CONQUESTS

Ala-ud-din was an ambitious ruler. He began to talk of founding a new religion and becoming a prophet like Muhammad and at the same time conquering the whole world like Alexander, the Great. He argued that as Muhammad had four companions; Abu Bakr, Umar, Usman and Ali, he had his four brilliant lieutenants like Ulugh Khan, Jafar Khan, Nusrat Khan and Alp Khan. He assumed the title of Sikandar-i-Sani, the second

Alexander in the Khutba and on his coins. However, he was rightly advised by his friend Ala-ul-Mulk, the Kotwal of Delhi to give up his wild dreams and come to senses. He pointed out that religion was the subject of the prophets, not of the kings. No king can be a prophet though some prophets had discharged royal functions. He further pointed out that many kingdoms of India were not under the sultanate by then, and there was the Mongol menace. Hence the sultan should not think of going outside India on world conquest when a large portion of India still remained unconquered. Further, in the absence of the sultan there was no trusted person like Aristotle to manage the administration at Delhi. The sultan came to senses and acted accordingly.

a) North India

Gujrat

Gujrat was one of the most fertile regions of India. The port of Combay carried on trade and commerce with foreign countries. Long before the Muslims the Arab traders had settled in this region. Ala-ud-din dispatched a large force against Gujrat during the reign of Raja Karan of the Baghela dynasty with his capital at Anhilwara. The command of the expedition was entrusted to his two most capable generals, Ulugh Khan and Nusrat Khan. Nusrat Khan marched from Delhi on 24th February 1299 and Ulugh Khan marched from Sindh. On the way the army of Ulugh Khan defeated Kanhar Deva of Jalor. On arrival in Gujrat the joint army, as usual started loot and plunder. Karan Baghela was taken by surprise and in confusion fled towards Devagiri with his daughter Deval Devi. His women and treasures including his chief queen Kamla Devi fell into the hands of the enemy. The temple of Somanath, which was destroyed by Mahmud of Ghazni in 1026 and rebuilt by Kumar Pala, was once again plundered. Its wealth was seized and the idol was broken and carried to Delhi in bullock carts where it was thrown at the gateway to be trampled under the feet of the people. Hundreds of towns like Asavali, Surat and the port town of Combay were plundered and destroyed. It was here at Combay that the slave, Kafur was snatched from his master who later played a prominent role in Deccan campaigns. After successful conquests they returned to Delhi leaving an army of occupation at Gujrat. Their booty comprised of huge amount of gold, jewels and other valuables and of course Kamala Devi who later married Ala-ud-din and was made the chief Queen (Malika-i-Jahan).

Ranthambhor

Ranthambhor was the first Rajput kingdom to be attacked by Ala-ud-din. It was chosen because of its proximity to Delhi and its reputation of being impregnable. The ruler of Ranthambhor was the Chauhan prince Hammir Deva, a direct descendant of the renowned Prithviraj Chauhan. The Muslim invaders had attacked it repeatedly but without success. Qutb-ud-din Aibak had attacked it in 1209, Iltutmish had attacked it in 1226, and Jalal-ud-din had attacked it in 1291 but had failed. In 1300, Ala-ud-din ordered two of his generals Ulugh Khan, the governor of Bayana and Nusrat Khan, the governor of Kara to invade Ranthambhor. In the battle Nusrat Khan lost his life and Ulugh Khan retreated back. Hence finally Ala-ud-din himself had to march to Ranthambhor with a large army. The capture of Ranthambhor was a long drawn affair where even an attempt was made on the life of Ala-ud-din himself. Fially Hammir went down fighting gallantly in the battlefield on 3rd August 1301. Thus ended the Chauhan rule in Hindustan.

Chittor

The success of Ranthambhor provided incentive for further conquests of Rajputana. His next target was Chittor, the most renowned citadel of Rajasthan. Chittor was the capital of Mewar with the Guhila Rajputs ruling there. The fort of Chittor was situated on a hilltop of 500 feet height. On 28th January 1303 Ala-ud-din marched with a vast army to conquer Chittor. Rana Ratan Singh, the son of Rana Samar Singh was the ruler of Chittor. The brave Rajputs under Ratan Singh offered heroic resistance for long eight months. Ratạn Singh died fighting in the battlefield on 26 August 1303. His wife Padmini performed *jauhar* along with other Rajput women. It is said that one of the reasons behind the invasion of Chittor by Ala-ud-din was his desire to obtain possession of Padmini, the beautiful queen of Chittor. The story of the peerless beauty of Padmini and Ala-ud-din's desire to obtain her has been described in many important sources including the works of Amir Khusrau.

Ala-ud-din remained at Chittor for a few days, massacred nearly 30,000 Rajputs, renamed Chittor as Khizrabad, appointed his eldest son Khizr Khan as the Governor of Chittor and returned to Delhi.

Malwa

After the defeat of Ranthambhor and Chittor many Rajput rulers submitted to Ala-ud-din without risking a battle. The ruler of Malwa, Raja Mahlak Dev, however, decided to resist Ala-ud-din. Malwa had been invaded by Turkish rulers a number of times. In 1231-

32 Iltutmish had defeated Malwa and plundered the famous temple of Mahakal. Jalal-ud-din had also made an invasion against Malwa. Ala-ud-din sent Ain-ul-Mulk, the governor of Multan against Malwa. In a fierce battle Raja Mahlak Dev and his commander in chief, Harananda (Koka Pradhan), were killed on 9th December 1305. The victory enabled Ala-ud-din to occupy Ujjain, Mandu, Dhar and Chanderi. Ain-ul-Mulk was appointed as the Governor of Malwa.

Siwana

Raja Sitala Dev of Paramara Rajput family ruled Siwana. Ala-ud-din attacked Siwana on 2nd July 1308. The Rajputs offered a brave resistance for a few months. Because of treachery by one Bhaile, Ala-ud-din was able to locate the sources of the drinking water channel to the fort from the near by lake and blocked it. This forced Sitala Deva to come out to the open and fight. Sitala Deva was killed on 10th November 1308 and the fort was captured. The Rajput women performed *Jauhar*. Ala-ud-din placed Kamal-ud-din Gorg in charge of Siwana and returned to Delhi.

Jalor

Jalor was only 76 kms away from Siwana. A line of Chauhan rulers ruled it. Ala-ud-din had two encounters with Jalor. The first one occurred in 1299, when Ala-ud-din, on way to Gujrat wanted to proceed through Jalor. But as Karan Deva rejected the request he had to cross sword with the army under Ulugh Khan. The second encounter took place in 1311. The name of the commander of the expedition is not known. The operation was a prolonged one and the Rajputs displayed great valour. But finally owing to the treachery of one Bika Dahiya, the Turkish army succeeded in entering into the fort and killed Karan Deva in 1316.

Bengal

In year 1302-1303, Ala-ud-din dispatched an army under the command of Malik Juna to Warangal. A powerful troop was placed under his disposal and was ordered to take the eastern route via Bengal and Orissa. The reasons for the expedition against the Kakatiya rulers of Warangal are not known. So also the reasons for taking the eastern route via Bengal and Orissa are not known, the shorter router being through Ellichpur, which the emperor himself had taken during his expedition against Devagiri, as governor of Kara. As early as 1302 when a large part of north India was out of the Turkish Empire it was surprising that Ala-ud-din thought of sending an army to Telengana. As a matter of fact Ala-ud-din's south Indian campaigns began from 1308. Hence it is generally believed that the expedition was actually meant against Bengal and Orissa.

Bengal has not been affected by Khilji revolution. Sultan Nasir-ud-din, the son of Balban ruled over Bangal even when his son Kaikubad was ruling over Delhi. Jalal-ud-din did not interfere in the affairs of Bengal. Shams-ud-din Firoze was the ruler of Lakshnawati in the year 1301/2, who declared independence from the Delhi sultanate, issued coins in his name and had his own *Khutba*. It was not possible for Ala-ud-din to tolerate the declaration of independence by Bengal.

The details of the expedition are not available. It is not known if the army reached either Bengal or Warangal. According to Barrani the army reached

Warangal but was forced to return without any success because of the onset of the rainy season. Ala-ud-din was so very busy during this period in north India that he could hardly give time for his campaign against Bengal and the enterprise failed altogether. Shams-ud-din Firoze remained firmly secure over Bengal.

Nature of North Indian Conquest

The conquest of Jalor completed the conquest of Rajasthan by Ala-ud-din. When some Rajput ruler gave a valiant fight some others surrendered to avoid his wrath. The Rajputs lacked unity. Individual forts offered stubborn resistance but no single fort was a match against the sultan of Delhi. If only at least two/three Rajput rulers had combined then they would surely have succeeded in defeating Ala-ud-din. Even Siwana and Jalor, which existed only seventy-six kms. from each other, allowed themselves to be conquered one after the other. But could not unite. Rajput forts, which were generally located on hilltops, were very good for defence but when besieged for long the height became a problem to get foodstuff and water supply for the soldiers. The Rajput military strategy depended mostly on their personal chivalry instead of developing their military strategy. They felt proud to die in the battlefields than to win wars. They had no contact with the outside world for which they had no knowledge of recent developments in the art of warfare. In contrast their enemy, the Turks were very tricky. When the Rajputs fought desperately, the Turks fought strategically.

b) Deccan Expedition

Ala-ud-din had come in contact with South India as the Governor of Kara under Jalal-ud-din when he invaded Devagiri. After becoming the sultan of Delhi he remained fully engaged in his north Indian conquests. But he had not forgotten the enormous wealth of Devagiri, which had brought him great fortune. He planned to conquer south India after becoming free from the problems of the north. Thus, greed of gold and lust for glory prompted him to invade south India.

Devagiri provided the immediate cause. Ramachandra Deva who had submitted to Ala-ud-din in 1296, and had promised to pay the revenue of Ellichpur as annual tribute had not paid the amount for some years. Ala-ud-din could not afford to loose the handsome revenue from Devagiri. Hence, in 1308, he sent Malik Kafur, the slave captured in Gujrat who had gradually risen to the position of *Naib* sultan through sheer merit, with 30,000 horses towards Devagiri. The army of Gujrat reinforced his army. Besides the realisation of 3 years' tribute, Malik Kafur was instructed to obtain possession of Deval Rani, the daughter of Raja Karan Baghela, the ex-king of Gujrat who had taken shelter in Devagiri along with her father. Kamla Devi, the wife of Karan Baghela was captured by Ala-ud-din during his Gujrat expedition and had married him as his chief queen. She desired that her only daughter, Deval Devi be brought to Delhi. Hence, the army was directed to capture her daughter from Karan Baghela. Raja Karan Baghela after being defeated in Gujrat had taken shelter in Devagiri. Ramachandra had treated him well and had given him Baglana to rule with his capital at Nandurbar. Singhana Deva, the son of Ramachandra Deva wanted to marry Deval Devi, which was opposed by her father because they were Rajputs and Singhana was a Maratha.

Malik Kafur on reaching Baglana sent a message to Karan Baghela to deliver his daughter or fight against the Turkish army. Singhana Deva renewed the offer of marriage and sent his younger brother Bhillama to escort the bride to Devagiri. Baghela agreed and sent his daughter to Devagiri. But on the way the party was intercepted accidentally by a group of soldiers of Malik Kafur who had gone to see the caves of Ellora. Deval Devi was captured and sent to Delhi. She later married the eldest son of Ala-ud-din Khilji. Thereafter, the Turkish army marched towards Devagiri. Ramachandra, the ruler of Devagiri was defeated and taken prisoner. His son Sinhana Deva however, escaped. Ramachandra was sent to Delhi to offer submission to the sultan personally. He was treated well by Ala-ud-din and was allowed to stay with princely comfort. Thus, Ala-ud-din created a loyal ally in south India. After six months Ramachandra was permitted to return to Devagiri with the title of *Raja Rayan* and a royal canopy. His reinstatement over Devagiri was a great diplomatic move of Ala-ud-din. Later Ala-ud-din received valuable help from Devagiri in his other south India conquests.

Telengana

On 31st October 1309, Malik Kafur was sent against Warangal. Ramachandra Deva provided hospitality and a ontingent of Maratha soldiers to the Turkish army. In March 1310, Malik Kafur succeeded in capturing Warangal with its ruler Prataprudra Deva appealing for peace. According to the provisions of the treaty that was signed, Prataprudra Deva handed over the accumulated wealth in the fort of Warangal and consented to pay the annual tribute. Thus, he was reduced to the status of a subordinate ruler under the sultanate.

Dwarasamudra

On 20th November 1310, Malik Kafur again started with a large army towards south. The army was assisted and reinforced by elephants from Prataprudra Deva and soldiers from Ramachandra Deva. The Hoyasala ruler Vira Ballala III of Dwarasamudra was taken by surprise. He was defeated and his capital was plundered. He agreed to pay a huge war indemnity and an annual tribute.

Mabar

After defeating Dwarasamudra Malik Kafur marched towards the territory of the Pandyas of Mabar on 10th March 1311. The ruler of Dwarasamudra assisted him. Vira Pandya, the ruler of Mabar avoided an open war with Malik Kafur and went from place to place, with Malik Kafur chasing him. In the process he came across Barmatpuri or Chidambaram where he raided the famous Chidambaram temple. Then he proceeded towards Madura, the capital of the Pandyas. The temple of Srirangam was also destroyed. All the temples near Kananur were attacked. In the process of chasing the ruler they went upto Rameswaram and destroyed its famous temple.

Third Expedition to Devagiri

After the death of Ramachandra Deva, his son and successor Singhana defied the authority of Delhi for the disgraceful episode of Deval Devi. Hence, once again in 1312/13, Malik Kafur was asked to march against Devagiri. Singhana gave a valiant fight but was killed. Malik Kafur remained encamped at Devagiri upto 1314 and struck terror in the minds of other south Indian rulers.

Nature of South Indian Campaigns

Ala-ud-din's conquest of south was neither complete nor permanent. It has been often described as being mere raids like those of Mahmud of Ghazni. However, his desire for territorial expansion cannot be totally denied. The way he treated the rulers of Devagiri and Dwarasamudra show that he wanted military bases in south India to conquer other kingdoms.

Ala-ud-din was the first sultan of Delhi to lead successful campaigns in south India. In the process of defeating the rulers of south India he succeeded in amassing huge wealth.

The brilliant success of Malik Kafur in the Deccan eclipsed the victories of Mahmud of Ghazni in India. He proved that the strength of the Muslims was superior to that of the Hindus in the warfare.

There was no unity among the rulers of south India. They failed to learn lesson from the destruction of the Rajput kingdoms in the north. The events of the north were repeated in the south.

Thus, Ala-ud-din succeeded in establishing a vast empire in India. In the northwest it extended as far as the river Indus. In the east it extended upto Avadh and probably Orissa and Bengal. In the south except the Pandya kingdom all other rulers had accepted his suzerainty.

c) Mongol Invasions

The Mongol invasions frequently interrupted the activities of Ala-ud-din. From the very beginning the

Mongols considered Ala-ud-din as an usurper who had captured the throne by assassinating Jalal-ud-din

The Mongols were a barbarian race that inhabited the secluded and wild region, north of the Gobi. The word Mongol has been derived from 'Mong' meaning brave and courageous. It was Chengiz Khan, the Great, who turned this indolent and barbaric race into an irresistible and invincible nation, whose name struck terror in the minds of his enemy. During 13th and 14th centuries the Mongols established a vast empire from Black Sea to China Sea and from Siberia to Indus and Seistan.

The Mongol invasions that took place during the reign of Ala-ud-din were very severe as compared to their other invasions and India was fortunate to have a strong monarch at the certre of activity when the most terrific of the assaults came.

The first Mongol raid came in 1297-98 almost immediately after Ala-ud-din's accession. Dava Khan, who had become most prominent among the Mongols, sent an army under Kadar Khan. The army crossed the Indus and carried fire and sword in Punjab. Ala-ud-din dispatched a large army under Ulugh Khan and Zafar Khan who succeeded in defeating the invaders. About 20,000 Mongols were killed in the battle. The victory in the early days of his accession enhanced Ala-ud-din's prestige and stabilized his position.

In 1298, Salda and his brother led the second Mongol invasion. They conquered Sindh region. Ulugh Khan and Nusrat Khan were busy in Gujrat. Hence, Zafar Khan was sent by Ala-ud-din who succeeded in defeating the Mongols. The ease with which Zafar Khan defeated the Mongols amazed Ala-ud-din and made him suspicious about his designs. He was, therefore given the charge of Samana, an important military post in Punjab by which he was practically forced to stay away from Delhi.

Towards the end of 1299 the Mongols reappeared in the northwest frontier for the third time with two lakh soldiers under Qutlugh Kwaja, the youthful son of Deva Khan. They crossed the river Indus and marched towards Delhi. Their target was to conquer Delhi and to put an end to the reign of Ala-ud-din Khilji. The rapid advancement of the Mongols towards Delhi made the people of Delhi and its adjoining districts panicky.for safety, people from the nearby places flocked to Delhi, making the plans of defence and movements of provisions all the more difficult. Ala-ud-din sent urgent instructions to his powerful governors to rush to the capital. Ala-ud-din was advised by his friend Malik Ala-ul-Mulk not to enter into the war himself immediately, or in other words to give preference to discretion rather than valour and wait till the arrival of reinforcements from the provincial Governors. Ala-ud-din did not accept his advice for the fear of being blamed as a coward by the posterity. Zafar Khan held the right wing and Ulugh Khan the left. Ala-ud-din himself commanded the centre. Zafar Khan died in the battle by moving forward without any support from behind. However, the brave fight given by Zafar Khan unnerved the Mongols. They realised the strength of the Indian army and retreated back during night. Qutlugh Khwaja was taken ill and died on the way back. Zafar Khan instead of being projected as a hero was rather blamed for his reckless fighting. In his heart of hearts Ala-ud-din was happy at his death.

Three successive defeats gave a setback to the Mongol power. Dava Khan remained busy with his affairs in the central Asia for about two years, which provided welcome relief to Ala-ud-din.

Again in 1303 about 120,000 Mongol soldiers under General Targhi Beg who had killed Zafar Khan marched towards India. Ala-ud-din was at Chittor when he came to know of the reappearance of the Mongols on the Indian borders. The Mongols besieged the capital city of Delhi for long forty days. During this period they raided the neighbouring villages. The patience of Targhi Beg was exhausted and finding the lines of defence of Ala-ud-din impenetrable he suddenly decamped and retreated from India to the great amazement and relief of Ala-ud-din.

Targhi Beg returned but the Mongol menace was not over. The repeated defeats made them more revengeful. In the year 1305, Ali Beg, Tartaq and Targhi Beg advanced towards India with about 50,000 soldiers. Malik Kafur was asked by Ala-ud-din tc face the Mongols. At Amroha a terrible battle took place in which all the three were killed.

The Mongols yet made another bid in 1306 when Dava Khan sent Kubak and Iqbalmand. Ala-ud-din appointed Malik Kafur to oppose the invaders for the sixth and last time. Kubak was defeated and taken prisoner. Iqbalmand's army was defeated but he probably escaped.

This put an end to the Mongol terror in India for many years. The Mongols invaded India six times during the reign of Ala-ud-din. They started with high spirits but ended off hard pressed defending themselves against the Indian generals. They developed a fear of the army of the sultanate. The invasions were very ill organised.

The repeated invasions in spite of their failures were more due to the personal revengefulness of Dava Khan than due to any military strategy. His death in 1306 put an end to the invasions. Unfortunately for the Mongols they had come to fight against a sultan who was himself, a warlord.

His Accomplishments

Ala-ud-din was the greatest ruler of the sultanate period. He was a man without any literary education but ruled over India successfully for long 20 years. He was a **brilliant general**, a **successful administrator** and a **farsighted statesman**. He was a **true Musalman**. He had great faith in his religion though he had not read the Koran, was not punctilious about observing its practices and was probably the only sultan of Delhi who never went to the Friday prayers. **Religious considerations did not influence his political decisions.**

He took keen interest in the **welfare of his subjects.** He imposed prohibition, himself gave up wine and required others to give up drinking. Other evil practices like adultery and prostitution were also banned. With a desire to bring social reforms he had the ambition to become the founder of a new religion.

He loved victories in the war and desired to become a world conquer like Alexander, the Great. He did not inherit, but founded an empire, the first all India Empire of the sultanate consisting of north as well as south India.

His passion for hard military life was relieved by his love for sports. He was very fond of big game suiting, pigeon flying and hawking.

Ala-ud-din stands head and shoulder above his predecessors and successors in the sultanate in matters of administration. Direct recruitment of soldiers, branding of horses, cash payment to the soldiers, control of the market, rationing and issue of permits, enrollments of merchants etc. prove his administrative genius. He introduced the system of measurement of land, collection of revenue by government officials and formed laws about the collection of revenue.

He was equally strong in his military administration. He had a complete grasp of the art of war. He learnt lessons from every war.

He was an imperialist but was fully aware of the dangers of thoughtless expansion. He defeated the Deccan rulers, levied rich tribute upon them and left them with their possessions. He clearly realised that there was no use in annexing what could not be consolidated.

Ala-ud-din has often been compared with Akbar the Great. He was the first Muslim ruler who left the Hindu kings in their respective positions provided they paid tributes. He showed originality in some of his military and revenue reforms. Later Sher Shah adopted most of his military and revenue reforms. The only difference between Akbar and Ala-ud-din was that the laters' administration was exclusively based on force. He was not so cultured as Akbar was. But two centuries before him he had also contemplated to found a new religion.

Chapter - 15

THE TUGHLUQS

GHIYAS-UD-DIN TUGHLUQ SHAH(1320-1325)

Ghazi Malik ascended the throne of Delhi on 7th September 1320 with the name, Sultan Ghiyas-ud-din Tughluq Shah and laid the foundation of the Tughluq dynasty. Tughluq was neither a race nor a family name. He was a man of humble origin. According to Firishta the father of Ghazi Malik was a Turkish slave of Sultan Balban who had married a Hindu Jat woman. He had names like Ghazi Tughluq or Ghazi Beg Tughluq. Ghazi Malik started his career as an ordinary soldier under Jalal-ud-din and continued to serve the sultans of Delhi faithfully. Gradually he rose to be one of the most experienced and trusted generals of the sultanate. At the time of Ala-ud-din's death he was serving as the Governor of Punjab with headquarters at Dipalpur. As the governor of Punjab he ably defended the northwestern frontier and also attacked the kingdoms of Kabul, Kandahar and Ghazni. His success at Punjab prompted him to look towards the throne of Delhi.

The death of Ala-ud-din on 5th January 1316 also sounded the death knell of Khilji dynasty. Though the dynasty continued to rule upto 1320, yet the period was full of internal and external troubles. There was infighting among the successors themselves. Ala-ud-din had nominated his younger son Shihab-ud-din Umar as his successor. He was only 5/6 years old. Malik Kafur became his first regent. Mubarak Khan, the 3rd son of Ala-ud-din, blinded and imprisoned Shihab-ud-din and declared himself as sultan on 19th April 1316. He ruled for four years. On 15th April 1320, he was murdered by one of his nobles Khusrav Khan who occupied the throne. Khusrav Khan was a Hindu convert who killed all the remaining successors to the Khilji throne. On 7th September 1320, Ghazi Malik occupied the throne of Delhi by killing Khusrav Khan. Thus began the Tughluq dynasty.

He enjoyed the advantage of pure Turkish *lineage* from his father's side. He was the first sultan of Delhi to add the word Ghazi (slayer of the infidel) to his name.

When he assumed the reigns of administration the sultanate was in a state of confusion and it was with great tact, prudence and firmness that he recovered the prestige of the sultanate. The nobles of the court had become negligent and engaged themselves in physical pleasures. Both Mubarak Shah and Khusrav Shah had distributed so much of wealth among the nobles that the royal treasury had become empty.

Domestic Policy

The first task of Ghiyas-ud-din was to strengthen his position on the throne by conciliating the nobles and satisfying the people. He succeeded in getting the support of Turkish nobles and tried to placate other nobles, even those who had supported Khusrav against him. Like a wise politician he forgot their role and allowed them to enjoy their former posts. But the nobles, who were found to be confirmed supporters of the previous regime, were punished and their Jagirs were snatched away. He arranged for the marriage of the Khilji girls who had survived the downfall of their houses. He tried to recover the wealth, which had been squandered by Khusrav as gifts to the nobles. A large part of it was recovered but a few like Shaikh Nizam-ud-din Auliya refused to return it.

He reorganised the administration, strengthened the police system, controlled the provincial governors and brought a general improvement of law and order at the centre. The department of justice was strengthened. A code of law based on Koran was drafted.

Agriculture

The sudden collapse of Ala-ud-din's economic policy had adverse effects on agriculture and economy. He substantially reduced the land tax and fixed the minimum limit to 1/10 and 1/11 in a year. He gave up the practice of Alai regime *i.e.* the measurement of land as the basis of the assessment of government demand. He ordered for substantial remission of land revenue during natural calamities like flood and draught. The cultivators were encouraged to extend the area of cultivation through reclamation of wasteland. The revenue collectors were assigned tax-free land for their service as against the system of commission or salary. The government officers were asked not to be cruel with peasants and to look after their welfare. If any officer collected excess revenue he was punished. He took special care for irrigation by constructing canals.

Other Activities

Ghiyas-ud-din made improvement in communication by laying new roads and by improving the existing roads. He revived the system of postal service by posting horsemen as runners to carry letters quickly.

Army

According to Barrani Ghiyas-ud-din loved his soldiers like a father. He was a capable general himself and organised a strong army. As a strict disciplinarian he continued the system of *Dagh*, branding of horses and *Huliya*, keeping record of the soldiers.

Religion

His treatment of Hindus was far from being praiseworthy. He continued some of the restrictions imposed on them by Ala-ud-din Khilji. He withdrew many privileges of the Hindu tax collectors. He ordered that the Hindus should not be allowed to amass wealth. As an orthodox Sunni Muslim it was natural for him to behave like a fanatic. He also often indulged in temple destruction and image breaking during the course of his campaigns.

Expansion of Empire

Ghiyas-ud-din Tughluq started with a determination to get back as much lost territories as possible. The territories that were lost to the sultanate after Ala-ud-din Khilji's reign formed his primary target in general, and south India in particular attracted his attention. He completely reversed the policy of his predecessors towards south India. Ala-ud-din Khilji conquered Deccan but did not annex it to his kingdom. His policy was almost to squeeze as much money out of the rulers as possible. But Ghiyas-ud-din wanted to bring the whole Deccan peninsula under his direct control.

In 1321 as soon as he was firmly established on the throne of Delhi, he sent his crown Prince Jauna Khan alias Ulugh Khan against Prataprudra Deva II of Telengana who had stopped payment of tribute after the death of Ala-ud-din. The fort of Warangal was besieged for six months. Prataprudra Deva finding no way out agreed to pay annual tribute but Jauna Khan demanded unconditional surrender. Finally the guerilla soldiers of Prataprudra succeeded in cutting off his line of communication with Delhi for which Jauna Khan was forced to retreat to Devagiri and the first expedition ended with failure.

In 1323 another army was sent under Jauna Khan to attack Warangal. On the way, he captured Bidar and some other forts to keep his line of communication with Delhi safe. The fort of Warangal was captured after a siege of five months. Prataprudra Deva was sent as a prisoner to Delhi where he died or committed suicide.

Besides Warangal, Jauna Khan probably conquered Malabar and Madura. On his way back he conquered Orissa (Jajnagar), Bhanudeva II the ruler of Orissa was accused of helping Prataprudra Deva. He left Orissa after plundering it.

Conquest of Bengal

Ghiyas-ud-din got an opportunity to interfere in the affairs of Bengal, which had become independent since the death of Balban. Even Ala-ud-din Khilji had not been able to bring it under his control. When the four sons of Shams-ud-din Firoze Shah after his death engaged themselves in fratricidal war for the occupation of the throne one of the brothers Nasir-ud-din appealed to Ghiyas-ud-din for help against his own brother Ghiyas-ud-din Bahadur who was in occupation of Lakhnawati. The sultan responded and proceeded in person towards Bengal. Ghiyas-ud-din Bahadur of Bengal was defeated and taken prisoner. Nasir-ud-din was enthroned there as a vassal of Delhi and the sultan returned with a large booty.

Death of Ghiyas-ud-din

According to Ibn Batuta while Ghiyas-ud-din was at Bengal he received the disquieting news of activities of his son Prince Jauna Khan who in complicity with his archenemy Shaikh Nizam-ud-din Auliya was planning to capture the throne. He hurried back to Delhi. Hearing the news of his return the Shaikh Nizam-ud-din Auliya is said to have commented, “Delhi is still far off”, (*Hanuz Delhi Dur Ast*). Prince Jauna Khan arranged a grand ceremony to welcome back his father at Afghanpur, a village six miles south east of Delhi. A huge pavilion was erected which however collapsed and sultan Ghiyas-ud-din and his younger son Mahmud Khan got crushed under its debris. Many historians blame Jauna Khan of having planned everything and of having constructed the pavilion in such a way that it would collapse with the slightest trampling by an elephant at a particular place. The contemporary accounts of Ibn Batuta blame Jauna Khan for the plotting. According to Batuta, Shaikh Rukn-ud-din himself told him about the plot. Shaikh was present in the pavilion and asked Jauna Khan to leave the pavilion before the elephants were brought in for the parade as the pavilion was supposed to collapse.

Estimate

Ghiyas-ud-din was a mild and benevolent ruler. He loved simplicity and always behaved well with his colleagues. He was a pious and peace-loving Muslim and always rigidly practised the principles of Islam. He always tried to promote the welfare of his co-religionists. He led an ideal life free from every kind of pleasure like wine and women. He saved Islam from the invasions of the Mongols. He was neither liberal nor oppressive towards the Hindus.

However his greatness is determined not merely by his character but on the basis of his achievements. Ghiyas-ud-din was a capable commander even before his accession to the throne. He conquered Bengal, Orissa and a large part of south India. His empire was more extensive than that of Ala-ud-din Khilji.

Ghiyas-ud-din was a successful administrator who combined firmness and fairness in administration. He brought the nobles under his control and rooted out corruption. He tired to improve the condition of the farmers by reducing land tax, providing irrigation facilities and by asking the officials not to be oppressive towards the farmers. He did not levy any extra tax. The department of Justice was reorganised and made very firm as well as benevolent. The Army was strengthened. Transport and postal services were reorganised. His measures were successful and caused an increase in the material prosperity of his subjects.

He was a great builder. He was responsible for the foundation of Tughlaqabad. The royal palace was very finely built.

Ghiyas-ud-din Tughluq was the savior of Turkish Sultanate of Delhi and the founder of the second and the last Turkish imperial dynasty at Delhi after the Khiljis. A comparison is sometimes drawn between Jalal-ud-din Khilji and Ghiyas-ud-din Tughluq, the founders of the two great Turkish dynasties at Delhi. Both of them saved the sultanate form disintegration at the time of decline of the preceding ruling houses. Both of them belonged to unprivileged Muslims and rose to power by dint of hard work and merit, both ascended the throne when they were advanced in age and had rendered valuable service to the respective previous regimes. None of the two was ambitious and power hungry and both ruled moderately and with a desire for the welfare of the people. Both died unnatural deaths and that too after ruling for five years. In any case Ghiyas-ud-din Tughluq stands head and shoulder high above Jalal-ud-din Khilji as an empire builder, as a soldier and as an administrator.

MUHAMMAD BIN TUGHLUQ (1325-1351 A.D.)

Ghiyas-ud-din Tughluq was succeded by his eldest son, Prince Jauna Khan alias Ulugh Khan, in February/March 1325. Later on he came to be known as Muhammad Bin Tughluq. At the time of the death of his father he was at Tughluqabad and was coronated there. He waited there for forty days to judge the situation at Delhi. After forty days, he proceeded towards Delhi where he was heartily welcomed by all, high and low, Hindus and Muslims who invoked blessings on him.

As a prince under Ghiyas-ud-din Tughluq, Jauna Khan had shown examplary courage by conquering various kingdoms of south like Warangal, Malabar, Madura and Orissa (Jajnagar). The plundered wealth encouraged him to stake his claim for the throne.

Muhammad Bin Tughluq was undoubtedly a versatile genius. As the son of a 'warden of marches' he had received excellent military training and started his career as a soldier. Nature had gifted him with a marvelous memory, a keen and penetrating intellect and an enormous capacity for assimilating knowledge of all kinds. His versatility surprised his contemporaries. He was a lover of fine arts, a cultured scholar, an accomplished poet, and a good caligraphist and was equally proficient in the subjects like astronomy, philosophy, mathematics, medicine and logic. In private life he was a devout Muslim, regular in his prayers and charitable in disposition. No doubt he was ablest of all the sultans of Delhi. He was most learned of all.

Muhammad Bin Tughluq started with everything in his favour. He inherited a vast empire, was himself capable and had the whole-hearted support of the people. Peace and tranquility prevailed in the sultanate. Distance provinces were under strict control. The youthful and energetic sultan, therefore, was expected to fare better than his illustrious father. But unfortunately he was **an abstract thinker and an idealist** rather than a practical statesman. Hence, inspite of all his best of intentions he failed and failed miserably. He had the misfortune of seeing all his pet plans end in disastrous failures. He was called 'wonder of creation'.

The character and achievements of Muhammad-bin-Tughluq have provoked large-scale controversy among the historians with diametrically opposite views. Inspite of the fact that, abundant contemporary records are available regarding his reign by eminent contemporary historians like Isami, Barrani and Ibn Batuta, yet scholars are not unanimous about his achievements and intentions. He is one of the most interesting and controversial characters of history. He is probably the most misunderstood monarch of all. He was definitely a man with ideas far ahead of his times. Historians like Barrani instead of dealing with his 'five ambitious projects' in a chronological order have described them in details dwelling more up on their failures and disastrous effects by giving exaggerated accounts of the sufferings of the people. Ibn Bututa describes him "as a man who, above all others is fond of making presents and shedding blood".

Muhammad Bin Tughluq was a believer of **divine right theory of kingship**. He believed in the absolute power of the sultan and did not allow any individual or class to interfere in his administration not even the *Ulemas*. During the early years of his reign he neither sought recognition of the Khalifa nor inscribed his own name in his coins. He interfered in the authority of the *Qazis* and kept every one under his control. This made the *Ulemas* and the *Qazis* antagonistic to him and spread discontentment against him. Finally Muhammad had to compromise with these classes of people.

Muhammad was tolerant towards Hindus and Indian Muslims. He was one of the few sultans of Delhi who distributed offices on merit and gave important positions to Hindus and the Indian Muslims as well.

EARLY REVOLTS

In 1326-27, Muhammad faced his first rebellion from his cousin Baha-ud-din Bursasp (a sister's son of Ghiyas-ud-din Tughluq), the Governor of Sagar. The sultan himself proceeded as far as Devagiri and sent a strong army under Ayaz against Bursasp. Bursasp was defeated and fled from the battlefield. He took shelter with the Hindu ruler of Kampilla. Consequently Kampilla was attacked and Bursasp was captured. He was brought in chains to the sultan who ordered him to be flayed alive.

The second rebellion was that of the Hindu ruler of Kondhana (modern Singhgad near Poona). He was defeated and compelled to pay tribute after a successful resistance for eight months.

The third rebellion was from Bahram Aiba entitled Kishlu Khan, the viceroy of Multan, Ouch and Sindh. He revolted against the inhuman and disgraceful treatment meted out to Bursasp. Muhammad returned to Delhi, made thorough preparations and then marched towards Multan with vast army. Kishlu Khan was defeated and Multan was captured.

REVENUE REFORMS

Muhammad was a very diligent ruler. Immediately after his accession to the throne he issued a number of ordinances for the improvement of the administration of revenue. The compilation of the expenditure of the kingdom and that of the provinces in a register was one of the most important steps. The provincial governors were directed to submit the report of their income and expenditure regularly. It was probably meant to introduce a uniform system of land revenue. He seems to have undertaken this compilation work with information from far off provinces like Bengal, Gujrat, and the Deccan with an intention to introduce a uniform standard of land revenue throughout the empire. Nothing is known about the failure and success of this scheme.

CREATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Muhammad Bin Tughluq created a new Department of agriculture called Diwan-i-kohi. It was intended to bring uncultivated land under cultivation by giving financial support from the royal treasury. As an initial step, a large area of sixty square miles was chosen for reclamation. The land was cultivated and different crops were shown. It was distributed among the needy. Large number of officers and guards were appointed to take care of cultivation in collaboration with the cultivators. As much as 70 lakh of rupees were spent in two years time. But the experiment failed because the land chosen was neither suitable nor fertile. The money spent for the purpose was not spent properly. Corrupt officials misappropriated a large part of it. The experiment was also quite new. The project was abandoned in three years' time, which was very inadequate. The experiment failed but nevertheless it was one of the best efforts in the field of agriculture.

TAXATION IN THE DOAB (1333-34)

The taxation of Doab was one of the major projects of Muhammad Bin Tughluq, which had disastrous effects. His foreign expeditions, expenditure on huge army, large-scale expenditure in the agricultural department etc. had adverse effect on the finances of the state. The royal treasury, which was the main source of the political power, had almost become empty. In a desperate state he was compelled to think of increasing his income by way of levying more taxes.. His strong desire to replenish his empty treasury made him turn his attention towards the fertile Doab region for enhancing the taxes. Different authorities have differently described this enhancement. According to Barrani the taxation was raised by 10 to 20 times. Firishta says that it was increased 3 to 4 times. According to Gardner Brown the increase was quite normal. By and large the scholars believe that the increase of tax was 5 to 10 percent and that there were no increase on land tax. Certain other taxes like house tax and grazing tax were increased. In order to realise the taxes he got the houses of the people in the rural areas numbered and their cattle branded.

The idea of imposition of increased tax was not new. The Doab was a very fertile land. Hence, its people had the capacity to pay more. The people of the Doab on the contrary were granted some concessions and land tax was remitted in certain districts at the time of recruiting the Khurasan army. Hence, it was neither illogical nor illegal to increase taxes on the people who had enjoyed the special privilege of concession.

However what is most important and unfortunate is the timing of the taxation. Taxes were increased at a time when there had been a famine in the Doab owing to scarcity of rainfall. Therefore, the peasants instead of paying the taxes abandoned their lands and adopted highway robbery. The tax collectors however, continued to collect the taxes by oppression, which resulted in wide spread revolts. These revolts were suppressed vigorously.

According to Barrani people were hunted like wild beasts and thousands of people perished in the process. This view of Barrani has generally not been accepted. Sufferings were there but these were more due to famine than due to taxation. However, later the sultan realised the gravity of the situation, though too late. Relief measures were adopted. Collection of land revenue and other taxes were suspended. Peasants were advanced loans for the purchase of bullocks and seeds. Provisions were made to dig wells for irrigation. All these measures, however, failed to persuade the peasants to take up cultivation once again. The hungry mob used the government loan more for food than for seeds. As such the house tax and the grazing tax had always been unpopular ever since its introduction by Ala-ud-din Khilji.

The policy of taxation of Doab was a miserable failure. Even usual revenue could not be collected what to speak of more. On the contrary the sultan became unpopular among his subjects.

TRANSFER OF CAPITAL

One of the major projects of Muhammad bin Tughluq was the transfer his capital from Delhi to Devagiri, which was renamed as Daulatabad. What led Muhammad Bin Tughluq to take this fateful political decision has not been ascertained from any source. Different scholars have put forward several reasons for this.

As the crown prince, Jauna Khan had close association with the Deccan and had led two expeditions against Warangal. He had succeeded in annexing Warangal to the sultanate. After his coronation the first revolt that he faced was from Baha-ud-din Bursasp, the Governor of Sagar who had received help from the Deccan.

Secondly, as a man of vision and as a man of ideas he believed in the political unity of the Indian subcontinent. He wanted to rule over entire India. According to him the administration of south India required more attention as compared to the north. It was an uneasy partner in the sultanate as north was very much under his grip.

Daulatabad was at the centre of his empire and more strategically located as compared to Delhi. Delhi was too near to the western frontier, which was constantly threatened by the Mongol raids. Muhammad wanted his capital at a safe distance. He was also aware that the wealth of south India could only be utilised effectively by an intimate contact.

On the other hand, he was vexed with the people of Delhi. According to Ibn Batuta, the citizens of Delhi used to write letters to him containing abuses. According to Isami the sultan resolved to break the power of the citizens of Delhi and decided to transfer his capital to some other place.

It is also argued that the sultan wanted to spread Islam in south more effectively with his capital at Daulatabad. During his earlier expeditions to Warangal, as crown prince he was fascinated with the pleasant climate, rich agricultural products, flourishing trade and commerce and above all the hospitality of people of the region. When he decided to shift his capital from Delhi, the majority of his ministers advised him to shift to Ujjain but Muhammad Bin Tughluq decided to transfer his capital to Daulatabad not to Ujjain.

The entire population of Delhi was ordered to move to Daulatabad. The population was hesitant to leave their dear city but Muhammad Bin Tughluq was adamant. He was bent upon taking all men, women and children with all their belongings. According to Barrani the ruin was so complete that not a cat or a dog was left behind at Delhi. Ibn Batuta writes that a search was made and a blind man and a crippled man were found. The crippled man was put to death and the blind man was dragged to Daulatabad where only one of his legs reached.

However, there have been different opinions by different scholars. Modern historians project that Delhi never lost its importance. It was never totally depopulated or deserted. The entire population of Delhi was not asked to leave. Only the upper classes consisting of the Nobles, *Ulemas* and Sheiks were asked to leave.

Once the decision was taken, the sultan made all possible arrangements for a smooth and comfortable journey of all concerned. From Delhi to Daulatabad the 1100 kms long trunk road, which was developed earlier by Ala-ud-din Khilji was further developed for the journey. Shady trees were planted all along the route and free food and drinking water were supplied to all after every 3 kms of journey. All were provided with means of transport, compensated for the loss of property and assets at Delhi. Finally all were provided with free residence and food at Daulatabad. An efficient postal and intelligence service was established and soldiers were posted throughout the route to protect the life and property of the travelers.

Notwithstanding all that, what the sultan had done the people suffered tremendously from fatigue, deprivation and mental agony. Many of them died on the way and many others after reaching the destination.

The scheme was a complete failure. The choice of Devagiri was wrong. It did not fulfil the requirements. The expectation was great. Slowly it became apparent that it was not the actual centre of the empire. Control over northwest was difficult from there. The people of Delhi never felt at home at Daulatabad in spite of the liberal patronage extended by the sultan. Delhi had emotional and sentimental attachment for them. They felt themselves as strangers in an 'infidel' land. The dissatisfaction of the people had its adverse affect on the administration.

The scheme failed due to various reasons. The sultan committed the mistake of asking the entire population of Delhi to proceed to Daulatabad. He should have shifted his court first and the rest would have followed automatically but slowly and steadily. The common people were neither interested nor prepared to shift to Daulatabad nor there was any need for the same. It was unnecessary to have ordered the transfer of entire population and expect them to abandon their homes. The people of Delhi treated their city as their ancestral abode. The Muslim population of Delhi was not willing to leave Delhi for a place with Hindu surroundings.

The historic importance of Delhi could not be reduced by an executive action. Within two to three years Muhammad realised his mistake and once again brought back the imperial court to Delhi without any fun fare. He committed a two-fold mistake such as the wrong choice of place and wrong method of transfer. If he wanted to punish the people of Delhi or if Delhi did not seem as an ideal capital from any point of view, and if he wanted to shift his capital for whatever reason he should have selected a better place suitable from all points of view. After having decided to shift, he should have shifted only the court part of it not the entire population. As a matter of fact, with the shifting of the court the exodus would have been gradual and painless, like the British transfer of capital from Calcutta to Delhi. The hasty and dictatorial nature of the implementation of the project accounted for its failure.

Many rulers in Indian history had two capitals. Hence, there was no harm for Muhammad Bin Tughluq to maintain Daulatabad as his second head quarters. There was no need for him to turn Delhi into a desert. As a matter fact many contemporary scholars believe that Delhi was not completely deserted. Coins have been discovered, minted almost simultaneously at Delhi and Daulatabad with the inscriptions on them as Takhtgah-i-Delhi and Takhtgah-i-Daulatabad.

The immediate effect of the transfer of capital was disastrous. The execution of the plan had tremendous strain on the administrative machinery as well as on the state treasury. The sultan lost the estimation of the people and could never win back their confidence all his life. It was a personal loss to the sultan.

Nonetheless, the transfer resulted in the migration and permanent settlement of a large numbers of Muslim elite in South India. Those who preferred to stay back at Daulatabad received lucrative government assignments and gradually dominated the Deccan politics. The propagation of Islam beyond the Vindhyas received impetus. Hence, whether Muhammad Bin Tughluq originally planned it or not he was responsible for planting Islamic faith in South India. If Ala-ud-din Khilji carried the Muslim arms to South India, Muhammad Tughluq carried the Islamic religion and culture that ultimately led to the birth of Bahamani kingdom.

INTRODUCTION OF TOKEN CURRENCY

Muhammad Bin Tughluq established a landmark in the history of Indian coinage. The introduction of token currency was a grand project launched by him. He introduced beautiful and various types of coins during his reign and fixed their relative values. Most of his coins were noted for their artistic design and execution. He fixed the relative values of different precious metals and issued various types of coins from different metals.

The introduction of Token currency was most important of his currency reforms. Token currency is a modern concept. In the contemporary world the paper notes have intrinsic value. Muhammad Tughluq in the 14th century was nicknamed as a 'fool' for his idea of introducing token currency. Edward Thomas has described him as 'a prince of moneyers'. According to Barrani he introduced copper coins but according to Firishta he introduced brass or bronze coins. Probably coins of both the metals were issued. These token coins were made legal tenders and their value was kept at per with gold and silver coins.

Several reasons have been put forward for the introduction of brass and copper coins. **First** of all he was in need of money for his ambitious military conquests and other projects. **Secondly**, The failure of the taxation in the Doab affected his revenue. **Thirdly**, Like all other grand projects of Muhammad who was fond of experiments, it was also another innovative project. **Fourthly**, He thought that this monetary reform would help him in stabilising the financial condition of the sultanate. **Fifthly**, He was probably inspired to introduce this measure by the examples of Kubulai Khan of China (1260-1294) and Kaikhatu Khan of Iran (1293). The Iranian Project had failed whereas the Chinese project had succeeded. This might have emboldened him to take up this project. **Sixthly**, It is also stated that this step was taken, as there was worldwide shortage of silver at that time. He ordered that people should use bronze and copper coins in all transactions just like gold and silver coins and that tankas of bronze be minted and used for and at par with the silver tankas.

In medieval India silver coins were very common. The increased trade and commerce and the payment of salary to soldiers in advance created problems. Aladdin Khilji had faced a similar problem of shortage of silver. He met the situation by reducing the salary of the soldiers and Muhammad Tughluq met the situation by different methods. First he raised the price of silver in relation to gold. The relative value of gold and silver was reduced to the ratio of one to seven instead of one to ten. Then he increased the weight of the gold coins and decreased the weight of the silver coins. Gold coins (*dinars*) were made of 200 grains instead of 175 grains. The silver coin (*adali*) was made 144 grains instead of 175. This indicates shortage of silver. Then finally he introduced the Token Currency made of bronze and copper, which was to be treated at par with silver currency. The fundamental principle of this token currency was the same as that of the modern paper currency. The intrinsic value of bronze and copper coins was less than the silver coins. But they were issued at the government guarantee. Hence, they were treated at par with each other. The idea on the whole was very good and a statesman like. But its execution led to its failure.

The sultan did not take sufficient safeguards to avoid imitation of coins. He did not take steps to make the minting of the coins as a monopoly of the state. The size shape and finishing of the coins were such that private persons could easily imitate it. No arrangement was made to prevent the circulation of counterfeit coins. Hence, according to Barrani the house of every Hindu became a mint and there was no reason to believe that Muslims resisted the temptation. Any body and every body who could effort minted coins. The market was flooded with fictitious coins. People hoarded gold and silver coins and paid their revenues in token coins. The foreign merchants purchased Indian goods by paying token currency but refused sell foreign goods without payment in gold and silver coins.

Within a period of three to four years the sultan realised the futility of the scheme. Never was so wise a reform measure so miserably failed. He was compelled to withdraw the token currency. People were asked to exchange all the token coins from the royal treasury with gold and silver coins. In the process, the counterfeit coins were also exchanged. According to Barrani, heaps of token coins rose like mountain in Tughluqabad, which were exchanged by gold and silver coins. It was a great loss for the royal treasury. The people grew at the cost of the state.

However, within a very short time the storm blew over, the panic ended and the situation was steadied. When all the forged coins were withdrawn forgery was stopped. If only Muhammad Bin Tughluq had the machinery to prepare standard coins, to monopolise the mint and to stop forgery by devising special methods for detections of forged coins then probably the system would have succeeded.

The success of token currency required permanent credit of the government. In medieval India when dynasties were frequently changing there was no guarantee that the successors of Muhammad Bin Tughluq could respect the coins as legal tender. Secondly, in the absence of an understanding or agreement between Indian government and the foreign governments regarding the exchange value of the token currency the foreign merchants found it difficult to accept the token coins in business transactions. Thirdly, the illiterate masses of India did not understand the weight of government guarantee. They could not compromise with the fact that bronze and copper coins could be equal to the silver coins. Not only that they were confused but also thought, that the government intended to rub them. Fourthly, the price of the metals depended on the law of demand and supply. The sultan did not control this by royal enactments. The price of the silver was raised frequently without any norms and logic.

Muhammad Bin Tughluq's idea of token currency was much ahead of his age. His subjects and officials failed to understand the worth of the scheme and therefore did not cooperate with him. The sultan possessed an imaginative mind but lacked practical wisdom. The scheme was probably sound in principle but lacked practical measures in the implementation. The sultan lacked patience. He desired quick success for which a scheme that did not achieve results quickly was abandoned with equal haste. He failed to appreciate the limitations and the circumstances of the age. Hence, he must be held primarily responsible for the failure of the scheme.

RELIGION

Muhammad Bin Tughluq believed in the divine right theory of kingship. He believed in the absolute power of the sultan. Therefore, he did not like the interference of any one even the *Ulemas*. He ignored the *Shariat* (cannon of law) and functioned according to logic and reason. He neither sought the recognition of the Khalifa nor inscribed his name on his coins.

The *Ulema* class, which enjoyed absolute monopoly over administration of justice, was not patronised by him. He put an end to their monopoly and appointed *Qazis* from outside the *Ulema* class. He often changed the decisions of the *Qazis* when he found them unjust and discriminatory. If a religious man was found guilty of corruption or rebellion he was punished like any ordinary man. No body was above law. Shaikhs and Sayyids were not immune from the rule of law.

This turned the *Ulemas* against him. Towards the later part of his reign Muhammad Bin Tughluq had to compromise with this class of people. He inscribed the name of Khalifa on his coins, sought recognition of his office from the Khalifa. In 1340 he invited Ghiyas-ud-din Muhammad a distant relative of Khalifa of Egypt to his court.

By nature Muhammad was tolerant, liberal and broad-minded. He was tolerant towards the Hindus. He appointed the Hindu and the Indian Muslims in respectable offices. Probably that was the reason why many contemporary Muslim historians have opposed him tooth and nail and have described the persecution of the Hindus by other sultans in glowing words.

MONGOL INVASION

In 1327 the Mongols led by their chief Ala-ud-din Tarama Shirin invaded India and ravaged the territory from Multan and Lahore upto the vicinity of Delhi. The sultan was taken by surprise. He had neglected the northwestern frontier. Historians differ as to how Muhammad Bin Tughluq dealt with them. According to Isami, the Mongols were defeated by his army at Meerut and were forced to return. Firistha holds the view that the Mongol chief was bribed with huge presents and returned back. The second view seems to be more possible. Muhammad had not taken enough precaution in the northwestern frontier for which the Mongols could proceed upto the vicinity of Delhi, unresisted. It showed the weakness of the sultan. Hence, instead of fighting he adopted a policy of reconciliation.

FOREIGN POLICY

Muhammad Bin Tughluq continued the policy of expansion of his predecessors. Like Ala-ud-din Khilji he had the vision of universal empire. After the return of the Mongols he dreamt of conquering countries beyond the borders of India like Khurasan, Iran and Trans-Oxiana. Khurasan was the first in his target. Under the instigation of some nobles who had fled from Persia and Iraq, the sultan undertook the project to conquer Khurasan. He raised a huge army of 3 lakh 70 thousand and paid them one years' salary in advance.

For some reason or other the Khurasan expedition did not materialise. Probably there was a change of diplomatic and political relationship between Persia, Egypt and Trans-Oxiana for which the sultan called off the expedition. Afghanistan did not constitute a part of his empire. Hence, there was least chance of success of Khurasan expedition, as he had to cross over Afghanistan before reaching Khurasan.

It was strange that the sultan took such an ill-conceived project under the persuasion of a handful of self-seeking refugee nobles. It was very difficult to carry such a huge army through the inhospitable climate of Khyber Pass and high mountains. Good sense prevailed upon him and he abandoned the project before executing it. A disaster was avoided. However the payment of salary of one years' advance involved huge expenditure. In any case, the army was disbanded. Out of this, about one-lakh soldiers were employed in Qarachil expedition. The rest were simply dismissed. The soldiers who were suddenly thrown out of job took up plunder and robbery and became a problem for the society.

Conquest of Nagarkot

The fort of Nagarkot was situated in the Kangra district of Punjab. This hilly fort had defied the Turkish army since the time of Mahmud of Ghazni. Even Ala-ud-din Khilji had not been able to conquer it. It remained in the hands of a Hindu ruler. In 1337 Muhammad undertook an expedition and conquered it. However, he restored it back to its ruler after his acceptance of the suzerainty of Delhi.

Qarajal (Qarachil) Expedition

The state of Qarajal had been called by different names by different scholars such as Qurachal, Kumachal, Kurmachal, Farajal, Qarachil etc. Whatever may be the name it was situated between Hindusthan and China. Generally, the region around Kumayun hills up to Tarain was called by this name, which was at a distance of ten days journey from Delhi and was a Hindu strong hold. According to Firishta the main motive of the sultan was to conquer China. According to Barrani he used a part of the Khurasan army against Qarajal as a preliminary step. But modern Historians have rejected both these views. According to them not only that the region was Hindu dominated and that his predecessors had not subdued it but also the hill chiefs of the region often gave shelter to the rebels against the sultans of Delhi. Khusru Malik, the nephew of Muhammad Tughluq was sent as the commander of the expedition. He had initial success and conquered the city of Jidya. Victory went to his head and he started to defy the orders of the sultan. Finally his army was totally destroyed by heavy cold, snow, plague and the hostile hill tribes.

Relation with China

Muhammad Bin Tughluq had cordial relationship with China. The Chinese Emperor Toghan Timur sent an envoy to Delhi in 1341 seeking Muhammad's permission to rebuild the Buddhist temples in the Himalayan region, which had been destroyed by sultan's soldiers during their Qarajal expedition. Similarly Muhammad Bin Tughluq sent Ibn Batuta as his envoy to the court of the Chinese emperor in 1342 who stayed there up to 1347. However, the sultan informed the Chinese emperor that the reconstruction of the temple was subject to payment of *Jiziya*.

LATER REBELLIONS

Later part of the reign of Muhammad Bin Tughluq witnessed a number of rebellions, throughout the empire. The oppressive policies, the disastrous failure of the reform measures, the transfer of capital, the introduction of token currency etc. made him unpopular and weakened his hold over the generals and the administration. Beginning with the rebellion of Sayyid Jalal-ud-din Ahsan of Malabar 1335, he faced as many as sixteen rebellions till his death in 1351. The failure of the sultan tempted the rulers to try to cut off their contact with Delhi and to set up independent states. The widespread rebellions provided an opportunity to the Hindus of South India to make a bid for their independence. In 1336, Hindu leaders named Harihar and Bukka laid the foundation of the Vijayanagar kingdom. The rebels of Devagiri repudiated their allegiance and laid the foundation of Bahamani kingdom. This set in the process of disintegration of the empire.

His efforts to suppress the rebellions kept him out of the capital for a very long time. He was so involved in the process that he fell ill. After suppressing a rebellion in Gujrat, when he was marching towards Sindh to suppress another rebellion, he died on 20th March 1351 out of sickness.

ESTIMATE

Endowed with many qualities of head and heart, the sultan's personal life was free from vices. He was a devout Muslim who was regular in his prayers and charitable in disposition but did not allow the *Ulemas* to dominate him. He did not hesitate to over-rule the judgement of the *Qazis*, which he did not consider expedient.

He was one of the greatest rulers of the sultanate but his character and performance have been subjects of controversy. He possessed extraordinary qualities as a person. He was well read and a patron of art and culture. He has been described as 'amazing compound of contradictions'. He has been called a wonder of creation, a break of nature and an ill-starred idealist. Barrani who was his companion for sixteen years describes him as 'a mixture of opposites'. He was an idealist and a visionary who was grossly lacking in practical knowledge of statecraft. All his projects were sound in theory but failed in practice.

He was a capable soldier and an astute commander. During his time the sultanate reached the maximum territorial as well as political dimensions from Khyber to Sonargaon (Bengal) and from Nagarkot

(Kangra) to Madura in south. No other Sultan spent so much time in the battlefield as he did.

He seems to have over estimated his ability and wisdom and formulated abstract schemes, which he executed in haste without considering the pros and cons of their implications. Inspite of his best intentions some of his lofty projects failed simply because either these were executed badly or lacked practical knowledge. People failed to understand him. Inspite of his personal accomplishments, his reign was a complete failure.

He devoted much of his time in devising administrative reforms in many directions. His intentions were always good, yet his administrative measures brought untold sufferings to the people and heavy financial strain for the state. Towards the end, he lost the confidence of the people. Severity marked his last days. Even Khalifa's patent authority could not save him. A man who had started his reign with everything in his favour ended up with every thing against him. And for this, he had himself to blame. Nothing was lacking in him. He was a scholar as well as a soldier. He was a well-meaning ambitious man of high moral character. People expected many things from him. However all his virtues and wisdom were of no use as he suffered from lack of common sense. All his projects failed because either they were impractical or were executed badly.

Modern historians maintain that Muhammad failed as a ruler because the circumstances were against him. The people were backward and prejudiced against him. His desire was to make his currency system scientifically sound, to have his capital at the centre of his kingdom, to remodel his administration etc. that seem very genuine in paper but failed miserably in practice. He was not prepared to accept failure. He was his own enemy. Obstinacy combined with lack of discretion and cool judgement alienated him from his people who once up on a time welcomed him. Elphinstone and some other English historians describe him as suffering form some degree of insanity.

The contemporary historians like Barrani and Isami charge him of blasphemy (being a kafer or irreligious). He was tolerant. He respected other religions and their sentiments. When he conquered Nagarkot he did not destroy the temple of Jwalamukhi. During his early period he did not care about the *Ulemas* who therefore became sore with him and charged him to be irreligious. However, during the later years he had to compromise with them and had to seek the sanction from the Khalifa. The accusations are not true. He was a pious Muslim who strictly followed the tenets of Islam. He got the Kalima inscribed on all his coins. His only fault was that he did not hesitate to punish even the *Qazis* and the *Ulemas* if they were found to be unjust.

Sultan Muhammad Bin Tughluq failed as a ruler. Inspite of his failure he has been assigned a prominent place among the rulers of the sultanate. However his scholarship, imaginative vision, enterprising spirit, personal valour and religious tolerance which otherwise were his assets and lacking in many other sultans failed to earn him the title of a successful ruler.

Chapter - 16

FIROZE SHAH TUGHLUQ
(1351-1388 A.D.)

Firoze was born in 1309. His father Rajjab Tughluq was the younger brother of Sultan Ghiyas-ud-din Tughluq. His mother was the daughter of the Bhatti Rajput ruler Ran Mal, a petty chief of Abohar in Hissar, east Punjab. The Rajput princess had to marry Rajjab in order to save the kingdom from destruction at the hands of the Muslims. Rajjab died when Firoze was only six years old. He was brought up by Ghiyas-ud-din Tughluq, who had great affection for his cousin and always associated him with administration. Although he was given all facilities yet he could not rise upto the mark. He neither participated in any successful campaign nor exhibited extraordinary administrative quality. His greatest virtue was that he was absolutely obedient to his cousin brother, sultan Muhammad Bin Tughluq. So much so in 1345 when the sultan was out of the capital for the suppression of the revolt in Malwa and Daulatabad he constituted a royal council to run the administration at Delhi, which comprised of Kabir Khan, Khwaja-i-Jahan with Firoze as its president. Of the three Kabir Khan had died during the reign period of

Muhammad himself and Khwaja-i-Jahan was executed later.

Firoze was present at the Royal camp of Thatta when Muhammad breathed his last on 20th March 1351. The death of the sultan brought utter confusion in the Royal army. Since Muhammad wished Firoze to succeed him, the nobles unanimously elected Firoze Tughluq as the sultan who was coronated three days later on 23rd March 1351.

Initially Firoze hesitated to accept the offer. Not only that there were other claimants but also he was not sure about the support of the nobles and the conservative *Ulemas*. Khwaja-i-Jahan who was at Delhi installed an infant on the throne and declared him to be the son of Muhammad Bin Tughluq. The nobles refused to admit the existence of any son of the late sultan. Besides, he was a minor. The time required a powerful man. So the coronation was not recognised and Khwaja-i-Jahan was put to death. Thus Firoze Tughluq entered Delhi with great pomp and show on 25th August 1351 at the age of forty-two.

Firoze Tughluq was not an usurper. His accession revived the original Turkish policy of election of the sultan. It emphasized ability against mere close relationship. According to Sir Woolsely Haig, Firoze was an usurper as he dethroned the legitimate infant son of Muhammad enthroned at Delhi. First of all there was no proof that the child was the real son of Muhammad. Secondly the principle of hereditary succession was not generally in vogue in the Turkish system.

However the accession of Firoze marks the emergence of two new principles. First and the most important one was that Firoze's mother was a Hindu princess before marriage, which did not matter and secondly Firoze himself was not an established soldier. It was an abnormal decision taken by the nobles to suit to the exigency of the situation arising out of the death of Muhammad when the army got scattered due to lack of leadership. However it goes to the credit of Firoze that he rose to the occasion and proved his worth.

DOMESTIC POLICY

Firoze shah Tughluq enjoyed a long reign of thirty-seven years. Peace and tranquility marked the first two decades of his reign. As such, since he was not a good soldier himself he did not aspire to conquer more and more of territories nor was he successful when he tried to do so. As a lover of peace he took interest in solving the problems of the state that had come up due to the policies of Muhammad Bin Tughluq. During the reign of Muhammad the subjects were dissatisfied, the conservative Muslims were disappointed and there was a total breakdown of economy. He appointed Malik-i-Maqbul, a Brahmin from Telengana, a recent convert into Islam as his *Vazir* or Prime minister. Firoze possessed the wisdom of selecting good subordinates and gave them enough authority to safe guard the administration.

Firoze inherited a truncated empire, infected with widespread revolts and disorder. The internal administration had totally broken down and the treasury was almost empty. The *Ulemas* were unhappy and the people in general were simmering with discontent. He himself desired the welfare of the people and attempted to achieve it.

Finance

Firoze abolished nearly twenty-four different taxes including the unpopular grazing and house taxes, which were a burden on the people. As per the Islamic law he levied only six taxes such as *Ushr* (1/10 of the produce), *Kharaj* (land tax), *Kham* (1/5 of the property confiscated during war), *Jiizya* (religion tax on non-Muslims), *Zakat* (2½ % of the income of the Muslim to be spent for the welfare of the Muslims) and later with the approval of the *Ulema* the irrigation tax (for those who used water from canals for agriculture – 1/10 of the produce).

Firoze gave a theocratic tinge to his fiscal policy by observing the dictates of Quaran and by including even the Brahmins under *Jiziya.* Instead of making 1/5 or 1/3 assessment every year he made the rate of revenue fixed for his entire reign period and the rate was fixed by Khwaja Hisam-ud-din Junaid after touring the entire kingdom for six years. This made steady flow of revenue to the state treasury.

He laid out 1200 fruit gardens to increase the income of the state besides providing good fruits to the people of Delhi. The peasants were freed from the return of *Taqavi* loan. The salary of the revenue officers was increased by giving them Jagirs to keep them free from corruption. His Prime Minister Malik-i-Maqbul was paid 13 lakh of tankas per annum, a huge amount that enabled him a luxurious life and was meant to prohibit corruption on his part. He abolished a number of trade taxes, which resulted in the increase of trade and reduction of prices. His fiscal policy yielded successful results. The people lived a happy and contented life.

Firoze set up 56 *Karkhanas* (factories) each under a superintendent. All the *Karkhana* superintendents worked under a chief superintendent, who enjoyed the status of a governor. These *Karkhanas* manufactured various articles, which were widely used by the people. The revenue policy of Firoze suffered from certain defects. The work of the revenue collection was given to the highest bidder who naturally tried to extort as much as possible. The payment of salary by Jagir was also defective. Thirdly the increase in the scope of *Jiziya* to include Brahmins was not proper.

Irrigation and Agriculture

Firoze encouraged agriculture by taking up a series of canals for irrigation. Five such canals were constructed. The most important of the five was the canal from Yamuna to the city of Hissar of about 240 kms. The second one was 150 kms long from Sutlej to Ghagra, one form Ghagra to Firozabad, another from the neighbourhood of Sirmaur hills to Hansi and the fifth one from Yamuna to Firozabad. According to Firishta he constructed fifty dams and thirty tanks or lakes and 40 reservoirs. The construction of the canals greatly increased agricultural production.

Public Works

Firoze was a great builder of works of public utility. He is said to have founded three hundred towns. The important towns founded by him were Firozabad (near Red fort presently known as Kotla Firoze Shah), Fatehabad, Hissar, Jaunpur and Firozepur (near Badaun). Firishta gives him the credit of the construction of 50 dams, 40 mosques, 30 colleges, 20 palaces, 100 caravan seraies, 100 hospitals, 100 public baths, 10 monumental pillars, 10 public wells, 150 bridges etc. Two Asokan Pillars, one from Meerut and the other from Khizrabad were brought to Delhi though he was ignorant of its real importance.

He also arranged for the repair of many important public and historical buildings. In his autobiography he claims to have repaired Jama Masjid, Qutb Minar and many such monuments.

Philanthropic Works

By and large the public welfare activities of Firoze were mainly meant for the Muslims though in the process the Hindus also enjoyed the benefits. He established an employment bureau, which arranged for the employment of unemployed people. He established a separate Department called Diwan-i-Khairat, which looked after the orphans and widows and cared for the marriage of poor Muslim girls at state expense. As a God fearing and religious person he arranged for the repair of the tombs of Sufi saints and arranged endowment funds for the Saints and Fakirs. He introduced a system of granting old age pension. He ran charitable kitchens and *Sarais* along the road for the pilgrims. He opened a magnificent charitable hospital (Daru-sh-shifa) in the capital for the poor and sick. The provincial officials were instructed to open such hospitals in provinces.

Currency

The poor quality coins introduced by Muhammad Bin Tughluq encouraged imitation and forgery. Firoze improved the technique of minting and issued several verities of standard coins. He produced abundance of fractional currency, which suddenly became very popular in the market and enjoyed confidence of the people.

Education

Firoze took keen interest in the promotion of education and learning. He was responsible for the establishment of many educational institutions and made adequate financial arrangement for their maintenance. One educational institution was attached to each mosque. *Maulvis* and *Ulemas* received liberal patronage. He was himself a scholar and patronised eminent historians like Zia-ud-din Barrani, and Shams-i-Siraj Afif. Firoze himself wrote his Autobiography, Fatuhat-i-Firozshahi. Barrani wrote Fatwah-i-Jahandari and Afif wrote Tarikh-i-Firozshahi. Firoze established a library at the temple of Jwalamukhi, which contained a fine collection of Sanskrit works one of which relating to medicine was translated into Persian and was named as Dalayal-i-Firozshahi.

Justice

Islamic law in the administration of justice guided Firoze. He restored the privileges of the *Qazis*, which was lost during the time of Muhammad Bin Tughluq. The *Qazi* at the capital was known as chief *Qazi* and there were other *Qazis* at the provincial headquarters.

He also held his own court to administer justice. He imposed mild punishments and abolished the system of torture to ascertain truth.

Slaves

Firoze shah was fond of slaves. During his reign the number of slaves reached one lakh eighty thousand out of which forty thousand were enlisted for service in the royal palace. However, he took special care for the improvement of the condition of the slaves. A separate department was created to look after the upliftment of the slaves. But this put avoidable strain on the state treasury.

Army

Since Firoze himself was not a good soldier his army remained weak. He did not maintain a standing army and generally depended upon the provincial governors during wars. The soldiers generally were paid in the form of land Jagir that was enjoyed on hereditary basis. This set a bad tradition of hereditary soldiership. When a soldier retired or died, his son, son-in-law or even a slave had to take up the service to retain the Jagir. This weakened the army as the principle of merit was rejected.

RELIGIOUS POLICY

Although born of a Hindu Rajput Princess, Firoze did not follow the policy of toleration towards the Hindus. He extended the scope of *Jiziya* and included the

Brahmins in its fold. According to him the Brahmins were greatest *Kafers* (irreligious people) for which they must pay more than others but certainly not less. Since he was an orthodox Sunni Muslim even the *Shias* and various other Muslim heretical sects were treated harshly. Firoze encouraged Hindus to embrace Islam and tempted them by giving Jagirs, titles, honours and high posts. Many Hindu temples were destroyed and the idols were broken to pieces. He destroyed the temple of Jwalamukhi in Kangra. One of his primary aims in attacking Puri was to destroy the famous temple of Lord Jagannath. He destroyed the temple and threw the idol to the sea. He reversed the process started by Ala-ud-din and Muhammad Bin Tughluq and allowed the *Ulemas* and the Divines to interfere in the administration. As a matter of fact his very birth from a Hindu mother must have made him to prove that he was no less a Musalman than those who were born of Turkish parents. Therefore he acted strictly according to the Quran and as per the advice of the *Ulemas* in all matters. He got the recognition from the Khalifa twice and called himself as Naib of the Khalifa and inscribed the name of the Khalifa in his coins, which was read in the Khutba along with that of the sultan.

MILITARY CAMPAIGNS

Vacillation and weakness marked Firoze Shah's military policy. It was essential for him to raise the stature of the sultan by recovering the territories that were lost during the reign of Muhammad Bin Tughluq particularly the provinces of Bengal, Sindh, Rajasthan and Deccan. He made some feeble attempts to recover Bengal and

Sindh but refrained even at the point when victory was at sight. The 'shrieks and wails' of women and children aroused his feelings of compassion and he did not want to put more of Muslim soldiers to the sword. So his two expeditions to Bengal failed. He was successful against Jajnagar (Orissa) where he proceeded up to Puri and threw the idol to the sea. He did not take any step to recover Deccan. Infact he wrote off the Deccan from the limits of his kingdom. The Raja of Nagarkot who submitted after six months of siege was honorably received. His campaign of Sindh was a failure. He had no knowledge of the area and his army lost its way in Kutch and was stranded for six months. It was only after the arrival of reinforcements from Delhi that the sultan was saved. However finally the ruler of Sindh had a formal submission.

ESTIMATE

Historians hold divergent views on the character and personality of Firoze Shah Tughluq. Contemporary writers like Barrani and Afif praise him as a just, merciful and benevolent ruler. Elphinstone and Elliot have praised him and described him as comparable to Akbar. V.A. Smith however considers a comparison between Akbar and Firoze as an absurdity.

Firoze possessed qualities of the heart but not of the head. He was honest, sincere and really wished the welfare of the people. But comparing him with Akbar is not proper. Firoze had neither the statesmanship nor the military achievements of Akbar. Moreover, Firoze was not a tolerant and liberal ruler like Akbar. When Akbar tried to bring a peaceful co-existence of all religions Firoze was a staunch Musalman. He needed the support of the *Ulema* and succeeded in getting it. He encouraged conversion to Islam by giving Jagirs and employment. He included the Brahmins under the fold of *Jiziya* who enjoyed immunity earlier. He even was opposed to the Shia Muslims and other Islamic sects simply because he was a Sunni.

Firoze certainly possessed some personal virtues. He was a scholar and patronised scholars. He gave priority to peace and prosperity than to war and conquests. He attempted economic progress. His efforts to promote irrigation, agriculture and trade certainly brought prosperity to the sultanate. His constructions of public welfare works were also admirable. The creation of employment bureau, hospitals, department of charity, gardens, schools and colleges give testimony of his intention for the welfare of the subjects, may be only for the Muslim subjects.

He was not a good soldier and much less a general. He was far from being a military genius. His army was organised in a feudal basis and was paid out of Jagir on hereditary basis, which greatly affected its quality.

His fondness for slaves increased the number of slaves to 1,80,000 but at the same time his interest and care for the slaves brought improvement in their condition though it cost heavily to royal treasury.

Though he has been described as a pious man, his generosity many times were misplaced and proved him as dishonest. The sultan gave money to his soldiers to bribe the officers to get some works done for them.

He was the product of the Age. The Age required a ruler who loved peace and prosperity. The citizens of Delhi who were greatly troubled by the experiments of Muhammad Bin Tughluq needed respite and Firoze was tailor made for this. The progress made in the fields of economy, agriculture, trade, irrigation etc. certainly brought prosperity by which people forgot the hardship faced earlier.

According to Dr. R.S. Tripathy, the irony of history is that the very qualities, which popularised Firoze, were at the same time largely responsible for weakening the sultanate. According to Dr. R.C. Majumdar, "on the whole, inspite of peace, prosperity and contentment that prevailed during the long reign of Firoze Shah no one can possibly doubt that his policy and administrative measures contributed to a large extent to the downfall of Delhi sultanate, and accelerated the process of decline that had already set in during his predecessor's reign".

DISINTEGRATION OF THE DELHI SULTANATE

In the Indian history all empires invariably declined immediately after reaching the climax. The Delhi sultanate reached its limits of expansion under Muhammad-bin-Tughluq but at the same time the story of its decline begins from the same sultan, just as centuries ago the Mauryan Empire began to crumble from the period of Asoka, the greatest of the Mauryas.

Natural Decay

Nothing is permanent in this world. Anything that has a beginning has an end. No empire has been permanent in the pages of history. Hence Delhi Sultanate, which was an unnatural empire, established in an alien soil, was bound to face decay some day, sooner or later. It was only a question of chance that the sultanate survived for little more than two centuries though its ghost continued to haunt the capital for three hundred years.

Vastness of the Empire

The vastness of the empire contributed towards its decline. In the age of slow communication the distance posed a problem for the administration. It was a source of weakness rather than strength. Sending of messages from one place to another was difficult. Horse was the fastest means of communication; even then it took weeks to reach the borders of the empire.

Law of Succession

There was no well-defined law ot succession among the sultans of Delhi. The 'survival of the fittest' was by and large the only law. Even in certain cases, slaves occupied the throne after the death of the master by sheer merit. This system was all right for some time as only capable rulers sat on the throne. But in the long run the principle weakened the monarchy. The competition for the throne was cut throat. When the major part of the time of the ruler was engaged in saving his own throne, not from his enemies, but from his kith and kin, it was difficult for him to devote time for the development of empire. So much of royal blood was shed and so much of royal life was lost that the very root of the Turko-Afghan monarchy was weakened. Many capable persons who otherwise would have helped the dynasty were assassinated in the youth.

Weak Successors

The death of Firoze gave the final bell for the disintegration and anarchy. The scramble for the throne and the wars of succession among various princely aspirants greatly weakened the administration. The rulers who sat on the throne of Delhi after the death of Firoze from 1388 to 1414 were pigmies as compared to their worthy predecessors. Inspite of this, the throne was hotly contested. Even the nobles and provincial governors freely participated in the war of succession with personal ambitions. This led to the decline of the honour and prestige of the sultan and disintegration and division of the empire. Ultimately, by the time of the last ruler of the dynasty Nasir-ud-din Muhammad the extent of the territory was reduced as per the contemporary saying, from 'Delhi to Palam' (A distance of about ten kilometers).

Nature of the Administration

The nature of the rule of the sultans was almost personal despotism. It worked effectively upto a particular limit. So long as there were strong rulers like Iltutmish, Balban or Ala-ud-din at the centre the situation was all right. But when weak rulers like Firoze came to power, it became difficult to maintain the fabric. As a matter of fact, the basic binding force in the Muslim administration was fear and force. When that was gone the sultanate was lost. The successors of Firoze were selfish fortune hunters and ease loving monarchs who accelerated the process of disintegration.

Role of Nobles

The self-seeking nobles and generals belonging to different clans and races and even the slave officers were not only involved in the self-destructive game of power politics but also tried to fish in the trouble water. Those who were more ambitious and competent established independent kingdoms out of the ruins of the empire and those nobles who were incompetent continued to remain at the court but engaged themselves in corruption and luxury.

Conquest of South

The conquest of South India by Ghiyas-ud-din Tughluq and Muhammad Bin Tughluq were brilliant pieces of military achievement, but it was doubtful if these were worth its price. Not only that the south was far off, but also it added to its vastness. Besides, the south India never reconciled to the authority of the sultan or for at matter to that of any north Indian ruler. Even the attempt to shift the capital to Daulatabad with a desire to keep the south India under control failed and failed miserably. Neither the south could be controlled nor the shifting was successful. The All India character of the empire was never a reality. During ancient period Samudragupta of Gupta dynasty had conquered south India but had set it free on payment of tribute as he had rightly realised the problem of ruling over the south with the capital in the north. Later Aurangzeb spent last twenty-five years of his life fighting battles in south India, yet failed to unite India.

Part Played by Muhammad Bin Tughluq

Muhammad Bin Tughluq was partly responsible for the downfall of the empire. His policies like transfer of the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad, introduction of token currency, taxation of Doab, and above all his military expeditions brought untold miseries for the people. He wasted immense resources of the state on his wild projects, which failed. There were revolts in different parts of the empire. It was during his reign that the Islamic Bahamani kingdom and the Hindu Vijayanagar Empires were established in Deccan and he almost remained a silent spectator to it.

Role of Firoze

During the reign of Firoze, the process of disintegration instead of being arrested rather was accelerated. Firoze Tughluq made many mistakes, which further worsened the situation. He revived the *Jagir* system in army for payment against military service, which made the military service hereditary, and reduced the quality of service. Ala-ud-din had raised a strong and well-equipped standing army and paid it in cash. Firoze discontinued the system and reintroduced *Jagir* system, which greatly weakened the army. More often than not only old and incompetent persons were found as soldiers. The offensive power of the army was lost during the reign of Muhammad Bin Tughluq while Firoze broke the defensive teeth. The dominance of the *Ulemas* in the state policy, defective revenue policy, increase in the number of slaves, costly welfare activities etc. rendered the administration weak.

Religion

The later Tughluqs failed to win the goodwill and support of the Hindus who formed the bulk of the population in India. Firoze alienated himself from the Hindus, by including the Brahmins under the *Jiziya.* He encouraged the conversion into Islam by offering gifts and high posts. Hence, the Hindus became hostile towards the sultanate. As a staunch Sunni Muslim he took pride in offending the sentiments of even other Muslim sects and beliefs. Under a fanatic ruler like Firoze, the non-Muslims suffered from civil disabilities. Except a few, most of the sultans did not have the good will of the Hindus. Like Firoze may of them were guided by the *Ulemas*. As a result, the Hindu subjects generally maintained an attitude of indifference and whenever possible the vanquished Hindu chiefs took up arms against the sultanate. The sultanate based on a theocratic principle had limited popularity.

Invasion of Timur

The invasion of Timur (1398-99) gave the final blow to the power and prestige of the Tughluqs. The failure of the sultanate in giving a strong resistance to Timur further exposed its weakness. The vast Indian army proved of no use before Timur who occupied Delhi on December 18, 1398. The city was plundered for fifteen days, thousands of citizens were murdered and vast wealth was collected. He mercilessly plundered and destroyed all the kingdoms that came on his way. The kingdom that Timur had not covered became independent by taking advantage of the destruction, weakness and the engagement of the sultan against Timur. Hence, Timur completed he dissolution of the sultanate but had no interest to rule over India. He trampled Delhi under his feet but returned to Samarqand without bothering to know who ruled over Delhi after him. It was amazing that for a period of more than a century and a quarter that not a single monarch could emerge at Delhi to be able to revive the past glory of the sultanate.

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